THE NEW LIFE;

OR,

COUNSELS TO INQUIRERS AND CONVERTS.

BY A PASTOR.

"I AM COME, THAT YE MIGHT HAVE LIFE." JOHN 10 : 10.

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
150 NASSAU-STREET,
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"I AM just four years old," said a veteran of more than fourscore, as he leaned on his hoe, in the garden. "Four years ago I began to serve God, and then I began to live."

How often the young convert is heard to exclaim, "I never knew before what it was to live; I am in a new world."

This accords wonderfully with the representations of the Bible, that sinners are "dead in trespasses and sins," and that the commencement of religion in the soul is a new birth, a new creation, a resurrection, *a new life.*

What an epoch! The birth, the bridal, the dying day are all eventful days; but none can be compared with that day when the soul is brought to the open door of heaven, and its immortal destiny decided.

To those who feel the momentous import of that position, these pages are addressed. They are naturally divided into two parts: Counsels to those who are anxiously strug-

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gling into this new life, and to those who hope they have entered upon it.

They are not *theoretical*, but embody the instructions actually given to large numbers in the course of a long ministry, and which have proved, under God, in very many cases, effectual. May the Holy Spirit impress them on the hearts of many others, and make them the power of God to their salvation.

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COUNSELS TO INQUIRERS.

I.

Your Case Defined.

You are no longer one of "the careless ones;" but, because you are awakened, it does not follow that you really desire to become a child of God.

Some, when awakened, are angry at God for throwing his judgments between them and their chosen sinful pleasures. Others cavil at the truth, and try to quiet their fears by perverting the word of God, or denying it. Others endeavor to find excuses for their sins, and satisfy themselves while continuing to live in them.

But your conscience now takes part with God in condemning sin. You loathe yourself

on account of it, and long to be delivered from its power, as well as its guilt, and to be reconciled to God and have him for your Father and Friend.

1. If such is truly your condition, do not be concerned as to *the process* by which you have been led to it. There is an endless diversity in the experience of different persons.

You may have been awakened from long years of thoughtlessness and unconcern. Some have said to me, "I never had a serious feeling on the subject of religion before in my life," and yet, in a few days, they have been sweetly trusting in Jesus.

Others have said: "I cannot remember the time when I did not want to be a Christian. My earliest recollections are of a desire to be a child of God; and those desires have followed me all the way along."

Others have said: "I am not conscious of any *unusual* feeling on the subject. It is no new thing to me. I have for months been reading the Bible, praying and sighing in secret places, yearning for salvation."

No matter how suddenly, or how gradually you have come to this desire.

2. Nor is it material what your *previous exercises* have been. When first aroused to consciousness you may have passed through a stage of cavilling and attempts to justify yourself; you may have tried to drive off your convictions, or drown them in sinful pleasures or business; you may have been conscious of deep enmity in your heart towards God and Christians, and the Bible.

Or your very first sensations on being awakened may have been a melting view of the goodness and love of God in Christ, overwhelming you with shame that you should have forgotten him so long. Do not be troubled about these previous exercises.

3. No matter *by what means* you have been brought to your present position. It may have been the conversion or the death of a friend; the preaching of the word; a letter from a Sunday-school teacher or other friend; the conversation of a Christian; reading the Bible; sickness; no matter what it was. The methods of the Spirit are infinitely various, there is a vast "diversity of operations," and his means are as manifold as all the works and ways of God.

But, from one cause or another, you can truly say, "I want to be a Christian. The world has failed me. Sin is a burden, and the cry of my heart is, 'Oh that I knew where I might find him! I would go even to his seat, and *cast myself upon him.*'"

Well, do that very thing—at once, just as you are; unconditionally and unreservedly: and Jesus will receive you. Enter into a covenant with him as definitely and deliberately and voluntarily, as you would with an earthly friend; and commence a life of trust and obedience, by doing the first thing Jesus lays before you, and then the next, and you are Christ's and *Christ is yours.* That is all you have to do; and if you will do it, lay down this little book where you are, fall on your knees before God and say:

"Lord, I am thine, entirely thine,
Purchased and saved by blood divine;
With full consent thine I would be,
And own thy sovereign right in me.

"Here at thy cross, where flows the blood
That bought my guilty soul for God,
Thee, my new Master now I call,
And consecrate to thee my all.

"Do thou assist a feeble worm
The great engagement to perform;
Thy grace can full assistance lend,
And on that grace *I dare depend.*"

Having made the consecration *confess it* to those about you, and so ratify the covenant; and as you confess Jesus, he will confess you.

"One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." Isa. 44:5.

II.

Difficulties.

But I fear you may shrink from this consecration from some mistaken view of yourself or of the way; and will try and remove any difficulty that may be hindering you.

1. Perhaps you are saying: "I would go to Jesus, but I am not sensible enough of my sins. I *know* I am a sinner, but I do not *feel* it sufficiently. If I only had an overwhelming consciousness of guilt, I would go; but my heart is hard and unfeeling, I fear he would not receive me."

But remember, God has nowhere made any particular degree of feeling the ground of acceptance with him. Jesus does not say, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *feels* so and so, shall find a rock under his feet:" but "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth them.*" If you have feeling enough to make you sensible of your need of Christ, and willing and desirous to forsake all sin and follow him, you need not wait for more feeling.

Some persons seem to be moved by an almost purely intellectual perception. They say: "I ought to love God and serve him. It is right. I am under infinite obligations to him, and he is perfectly good and lovely. I will attempt it, and if I perish, I perish." And they begin. Such may be as acceptable to God as if they had had the deepest feeling. You cannot command yourself to *feel* any particular sensation; but you can command yourself to *act* according to your consciousness of right, and in this Jesus will meet and accept you, and take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Such was the case recently with a young man in W—— college. God was pouring out his Spirit, and many were bowing at his feet. But there was one who seemed unaffected, and whose character and standing were such that none dared approach him. At length his classmates appointed one of their number, H—— L——, to speak to him, while they held his case before God. He sought a favorable opportunity and tenderly urged the subject upon him as they were walking together. He was received respectfully, yet with so much

indifference as to discourage the expectation of any favorable result. But the next time they met the young man said to him,

"H——, I have done that."

"Done what?" said H——.

"Given myself to Jesus, as you urged me to do. I went to my room, and thought over my condition, my great indebtedness to God. I bowed down before him and consecrated my all to him, and now I am happy in the assurance of his love."

He went immediately to the social meeting and made the same avowal, and became an active and earnest Christian. So it was with the eunuch on the road to Gaza, and so may it be with you.

2. But you may say, "I have not suffered enough yet for my sins."

God does not ask you to suffer, nor has he any delight in your suffering. Jesus has suffered for you. So far as this is concerned, it is true, that

> "Jesus paid it all,
> All the debt you owe;
> Nothing, great or small
> Remains for you to do."

Your intensest suffering for a thousand years would not atone for your sins; nor is it necessary. Certainly it is the universal consciousness of the world that sin deserves suffering. Hence all false religions consist largely in self-torture. For this the heathen afflicts himself—swings on tenter-hooks—throws his children to the crocodile, or into the arms of the burning, brazen Moloch. He is paying for his sins—appeasing the anger of an offended god. The Romanist endures all manner of penances for the same object: and many Protestants try to secure forgiveness, or rather justification, in the same way. But God has laid upon Jesus "the iniquity of us all, and by his stripes we are healed." "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities."

This waiting for agonizing conviction grows out of a mistaken idea of the object of conviction. It is not to pay for sin: nor to propitiate God, or make him willing to forgive. It is simply to make you willing to come to Jesus and be saved; a sort of chastening which God inflicts to wean from sin and *subdue the will*. Let me illustrate:

Here are two sons in one family. They are both disobedient and undutiful, seeking their own pleasure, regardless of the wishes of their father and their duty to him. He summons them into his presence and sets their wickedness and ingratitude distinctly before them. They both see the wrong and are conscious of guilt. One of them, as soon as it is distinctly before him, goes right to his father's feet and says: "Father, I have done wrong; I have treated you shamefully; I did not realize it before, but I see it now, and am sorry for it. From this hour I will be an obedient and loving son. Will you forgive me?"

The other sees his guilt, but he is stubborn. He says to himself, "I will not go to my father's feet in that way." So the father remonstrates, and finally inflicts chastisement; the wilful son all the while bracing himself not only against these sufferings, but against his own consciousness of wrong; till at last, half starved, and bruised, and mortified, his stubborn will is broken, and he goes to his father's feet just as his brother did at the beginning, with the same confession and covenant of obedience and love. Does the father love him

any better, or is he any more ready to forgive him because he had to scourge him into it? Was it any *pleasure* to him to chastise his son? Ah, he would sooner have taken the blows *himself*, if it would have answered his purpose.

And note distinctly what that purpose is. It is not to punish him for past offences, though they have been ever so great and long continued; but to secure present and future obedience and love. And that is the object of conviction for sin. It is not as satisfaction to God for the past; Jesus has done that on the cross. It is not to propitiate God towards us and make him willing to forgive. "As I live," saith the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." It is simply to bring the sinner to submit his will to God, renounce all sin, yield obedience to him, and acknowledge his great goodness and love.

And it is important to remember, that there is just as great diversity in different persons in the degree of resistance to the claims of God, as there is to the claims of an earthly parent.

Some have supposed that no one would

yield to those claims till driven to extremity, till he felt that it was his last call, and that he was just ready to sink into hell. Some do resist till that awful consciousness overwhelms them; but not all. Nor is there the slightest necessity for it, or virtue in it. It only indicates the degree of one's resistance to God.

There are those who have led a gay and thoughtless life of sinful pleasure, till perhaps in some unexpected moment they have had such a perception of the love and compassion of Jesus as to melt the heart, and lead them to say at once, "Blessed Jesus, hast thou borne all this for me, and gained no thought of mine! I am ashamed of my ingratitude and thoughtlessness. Henceforth thou shalt be my Lord and my Redeemer." And so, with scarce an hour of painful conviction, the heart is yielded—the life of God is begun in the soul, and the great transaction done.

Others resist and cleave to sin and set up their stubborn will, till weeks of agony, with sleepless nights and wearisome days, have constrained them to bow at the feet of Jesus and yield up all to him. The transition of

feeling may be greater in this case than the other, but the favor of God, and acceptance through Christ is no more certain or cordial, and conversion no more genuine.

If you are ready to forsake sin and turn to God, conviction has done its work, and you need not wait for more. Come at once to Jesus, with a humble trusting heart, saying:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee.
O Lamb of God, I come."

3. "I do not feel as I expected to."

You had formed a plan according to which you would be converted, and are waiting for that. But you wait in vain.

In a ministry of nearly forty years, during which I trust some thousands have turned to Christ, I do not recall one who has ever had those anticipations realized.

Many years ago I knew well two brothers. The elder had become skeptical, did not believe in conversion at all, or the reality of religion. The younger believed in it fully, and was hoping and longing for it. In a re-

vival, the wife of the former was brought to Jesus, and as she related her conversion to her husband, he was seized with trembling. She thought he was going into convulsions, but he fell upon the floor and began to cry for mercy. For several hours he expected every moment to sink into hell. At length he yielded all and gave himself up to the will of Jesus. Immediately he was filled with joy, and sprang up shouting, "Glory to God!" while he seemed to be surrounded by a brightness above that of the sun. He called up his journeymen and apprentices, and began to preach Jesus to them, and for more than thirty years he has continued a burning and a shining light.

The other brother had marked out just such a conversion for himself; was watching and praying, and waiting for it; but never obtained even an approximation to it. After waiting several years, he was led, without any overwhelming agony, or one such sensation as he had supposed constituted conviction of sin, voluntarily to give himself up to do the will of Jesus. And then, he felt no rapture, no sudden and marked transition, only a gentle

calmness: peace with God, delight in prayer, in the Bible, and in Christian conversation; and after several days, although it seemed great presumption, he was led to cherish a hope in Christ. He, too, has continued to the present, and is now a successful minister of Christ.

So, usually, God leads the soul in a way that it knew not. Therefore do not be discouraged, because you cannot feel as you expected; and do not wait on that account.

4. "I do not feel as others do, of whom I have heard or read."

That has hindered a great many from coming to Christ. It is natural, almost unavoidable, to select some model, according to which any desirable result shall be obtained. There is some advantage in this, in all the pursuits and studies of life. We always feel safer, in attempting to do a thing, from seeing it done, than from being told how to do it.

But in the conversion of the soul there is great danger in this comparison, because many things occur in the conversion of one person which do not in the case of another.

There are some things which are essential

to a true conversion, and which will be alike in all cases; but there are other things which are merely incidental, and may or may not occur in any particular case. They depend on education, disposition, habits, providences, and the methods of the Spirit. The former are always essentially alike; the latter, infinitely various. To wait for these incidental things, which have occurred to others, will be to wait in vain, and perhaps till it is too late. And what increases the danger is, that these incidental things are the most striking and obvious—most likely to fix attention.

Look, for instance, at the conversion of Paul and of Matthew, one a type of the most marvellous, the other of the most mild and gentle conversion.

Saul of Tarsus, breathing out threatening and slaughter against the church, was suddenly arrested by a light and a voice from heaven, and thrown upon the ground, not only without his own seeking but against his own convictions. He was compelled to believe. Evidence too strong to be resisted overcame his skepticism and his pride, and

constrained him to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Matthew was a candid inquirer after truth. He had just been listening to the words of our Lord as He taught by the seaside. Jesus knew that those words had entered his heart, and as he passed out of the congregation he said to Matthew, "Follow me;" and he rose at once, and, at the sacrifice of every worldly interest, yielded obedience to the command of Christ, and followed him: a calm, deliberate submission to the Saviour.

Now the *essential* things in these two cases were alike; they both were led to believe in Christ; they both yielded themselves in obedience to him; they both forsook all else for him. But the incidental things, how different. And yet these incidental things are what strike the eye. We hardly see the penitence, the faith, the obedience of Paul, from the splendor of the light which led him to it. And thousands select these marvellous incidents in the case of Paul as their model of conversion, where one looks to Matthew. Yet Paul was the only one among the apostles who experienced such wonders. There are still such

cases; but, like Paul's, they are almost always cases of violent opposers, infidels, profligates, or persons of great stubbornness of will or pride of character. But you, whom I address are not of these. You want to have Christ for your personal Saviour. You are not an opposer or skeptical, or mad against the saints. Give up, therefore, your expectations of the marvellous, and yield yourselves deliberately to the claims of Christ. Cast away your plans, forsake all earthly things that stand in your way; arise and follow Jesus at once with the song:

"I do believe, I now believe,
That Jesus died for me;
And through his blood, his precious blood
I shall from sin be free."

5. "If I only felt like a Christian, I would gladly enter on the service of Christ."

Here multitudes of sinners halt, and make shipwreck of their souls. You are reversing the order that Christ has appointed. Jesus says to you, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." You say to Jesus, "Lord, give me rest, and I will come to thee." Jesus

says, "Take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest to your soul." You say to him, "Lord, give me rest and I will take thy yoke." Jesus says, "Hear and do these sayings of mine, and you shall find a rock under your feet." You say to him, "Lord, let me feel the rock under my feet and then I will hear and do."

So, through all the teachings of Jesus. Peace is the result of believing and obeying. The lepers, when Jesus said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priest," did not stand to say, "Lord, it is useless for us to go to the health officer: we can't get a certificate; we acknowledge that we are lepers; heal us and we will go:" but started to obey Christ, all leprous as they were, and "as they went they were healed." When they exercised faith by obeying Christ, he exercised his power to heal them.

So with those who were bitten by the fiery serpents. They must *look*, before they were healed. And "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so" has the Son of man been "lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but have everlasting

life." But he must believe *first*. The *life* comes through the exercise of faith.

Oh, how many perish right here. There is a father. He says: "I would pray in my family, but I do not feel that I am a Christian. If I only knew that Christ had accepted me I would do anything; but it seems presumption for me to attempt to do it, without that assurance." No, it is not presumption. It is only beginning to obey Christ; and when you begin, with full purpose to do *all his will*, he will save you.

Here is a young man. He says: "If I only felt that I was forgiven, I would be willing to tell everybody." But you are to confess Christ before he confesses you.

A young physician came to me, on the way to church not long ago, and said: "I am discouraged. I have done all I can, and find no relief."

"What have you done?"

"I went home from meeting, after hearing about the prodigal, took my Bible, went to my room, and resolved to give all up and begin to serve God. I spent half the night on my knees, but I don't get any relief."

"Did you tell your mother in the morning, what you had done?"

"No."

"Did you let anybody know what your purpose was?"

"No."

"Well, you took your resolutions all back. You did not 'arise and go.' Now you are on your way to meeting: when the opportunity is given, will you rise and tell the people where you are?"

"I could not say that I love God, or have any hope as a Christian, for I have not."

"Well, you could say that you have resolved to serve God the remainder of your life."

"Yes, I could say that."

At the close of the meeting, all who could say,

> "'T is done, the great transaction 's done,
> I am my Lord's and he is mine,"

were invited to signify it, when the doctor rose, with deep solemnity, and said: "My friends, I can say that, all but the last clause; I can say, 'I am my Lord's;' but I cannot say that 'he is mine.' I am fully resolved to

try to serve him: but I have no evidence that he has accepted me. Pray for me."

The next day he called upon me with a radiant face. "Oh," said he, "now I can say, 'Jesus is mine.' My soul was filled with peace the moment I made that confession of Christ last night. I could not conceive it possible that so small a thing should make such a change in my feelings."

"Doctor," said I, "it is no small thing to begin to *obey Christ*. The act itself may be small; but it indicates the yielding of the will to God, and that is everything."

This *act of faith* marks the great final struggle of the soul—*trusting and obeying*, with only the word of Jesus to depend upon. A little child was once on board a vessel, lying at the wharf. Her father was down in the hold of the ship, attending to the cargo, when she came to the hatchway and looked down. She could see nothing, but she called out:

"Papa, are you down there?"

"Yes, I am here; jump, and I will catch you."

"Oh, but it's all dark; I can't see you."

"No, you can't see me, but I can see you,

and you can hear me; you know I never deceived you; jump, and I will catch you; you sha'n't be hurt."

It was a fearful struggle. The little heart throbbed; but when the assurance was repeated by that well-known voice, she summoned all her resolution, and jumped right into the darkness, and was caught by those strong arms and pressed to that loving heart. That was TRUST.

The next day she came to the hatchway again and called, "Papa, are you down there?"

"Yes."

"May I jump again?"

"Yes."

And down she went, without the slightest fear or hesitation. It had become a pleasure to her. She had found by experience how safe and sweet it was.

So the sinner comes to the verge. It is dark. You cannot see Jesus; you can only hear him say, "Come to me, and I will give you rest. Cast yourself into my arms; you shall not fall." But you stand and tremble. It is a fearful struggle; but trust him; throw yourself into his arms in the darkness, and

you shall be embraced, and pressed to his loving heart. And when once the soul has surrendered, how easy, how delightful it becomes: yet many shirk from that act of faith and perish.

How strange this reluctance to rely upon the word of God must appear to holy beings, especially in view of all the reasons he has given for such reliance. Did you ever think in how many ways God has assured you of his readiness to receive you? The poor prodigal, when he said, "I will arise and go to my father," might well go with a burdened and anxious heart; for he had not heard a word from home and knew nothing of the spirit with which he would be received. Let us suppose for a moment, that, as he journeys along with naked feet over the burning sands, weighed down with apprehensions, and saying to himself, "Oh, that I knew how my father feels towards me. I fear that I shall be spurned away with bitter reproaches from his presence—it would be but just and right," he meets a horseman, who, as he approaches, says,

"Are you the Prodigal Son?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I have a letter for you."

He takes the letter and looks upon the superscription. It is his father's writing. "Oh, now," he says, "I shall know." With a faint and trembling heart he breaks the seal and reads:

"My Dear Son: I have nourished and brought you up as a child, but you have rebelled against me. Your words have been stout against me. You have said it is vain to serve me; there is no profit in it. Still, I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have never forgotten you. I have seen you and pitied you in all your wanderings. Return unto me, and I will return unto you. When you are weary and heavy laden, come unto me, and I will give you rest. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Forsake your evil ways and your wicked thoughts, and return unto me, and I will abundantly pardon you, and receive you to myself."

Oh, who can tell the rapture of that heart as he exclaims, "Is that the reception that awaits me! Is that the father against whom

I have sinned!" Not a doubt remains of his welcome home; the burden and anxiety are all removed, and with a light step he presses his way on, longing to fall at that father's feet with his confession.

Dear reader, no such letter reached the prodigal, to cheer his heart; but just such a letter God has sent to you. The above are only a few of the many messages of love and pity with which he would inspire your confidence, and win your heart. Then *trust* his grace, and go penitently to his feet, with a full surrender, saying:

"I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all and frees us
From the accursèd load.

"I rest my soul on Jesus,
This weary soul of mine;
His right hand me embraces,
I on his breast recline."

And sweetly resting on him, do not be afraid to add:

"I love the name of Jesus,
Immanuel, Christ the Lord;
The name, of names most precious,
By my whole heart adored."

6. You may be saying, "I would go to Jesus, but I do not know as it is his Spirit which is moving me. It seems to be the operation of my own mind, and I am afraid it would not be genuine."

That is just the way the Spirit usually moves upon the heart. Like the wind, it is only by its effects that it is discernible. You are not to wait for any manifestly miraculous influence. The Spirit will make no new revelation to you, but take of the things of Christ and show them unto you; and in such a way as to lead you to act freely. *Voluntariness* in accepting Christ, so far as our consciousness is concerned, is everywhere presented in the Bible. "Take my yoke upon you." The ox comes voluntarily and puts his neck under the yoke—takes it upon him. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her." If you ever have Jesus for your Saviour, it will be because you *choose* him; and if you fail it will be because "You will not come unto him that you might have life." Do not hesitate to come to Jesus because it seems to be *voluntary*.

7. You may be prevented from finding peace by concealing your desires, shutting up your heart and smothering the flame that is kindling there, saying, "If I only had Christ for my Saviour, I would not care who knew it, but I don't want to say anything about it till then."

Dear friend, there is no private way to the favor of God. If you are ashamed of Christ, he will be ashamed of you; and remember, you are to confess him before he confesses you. "Whoso confesseth me before men, him will I confess before the angels of God." You have sinned openly, and you must confess openly.

There is a most astonishing reluctance to open the heart, and communicate freely and honestly with one's dearest friend on this subject. A dear son may be constant in prayer night and morning, and yet would almost as soon be caught stealing as upon his knees; and a daughter perhaps, for fear her mother will find it out, will not kneel, but goes to bed and prays there; and that too when she knows that nothing on earth would afford her mother such joy as to know she was praying.

Here is a husband and wife. They have been married ten years, and on all other subjects are perfectly confidential, and have not a secret between them. But in regard to the soul, they are separated as by a wall of adamant. They are as utter strangers to each other's heart on this subject as they were at the beginning of their acquaintance. The wife has often thought, "Oh, that my husband would become a Christian! How glad I would be to go with him." At the same time the husband was sighing in secret places and saying, "I wish I knew whether my wife ever thinks seriously about religion." Here are their children growing up. They need a father's and a mother's prayers and counsels. Yet when together neither dares to speak to the other. So with parents and children, brothers and sisters, and dear friends. One of the most effective steps toward Christ is, to be *frank* on this as on other subjects.

I read recently of a couple affianced to be married—the gentleman in New York, and the lady in Boston. Of course they were corresponding frequently, and in one of his letters the gentleman remarked: "There is

unusual attention to the subject of religion in our congregation just now: by the way, what do you think about this matter of religion?"

Rather non-committal, but oh what issues were suspended on her answer to that simple question! Suppose she had said, "As to the subject of religion, I don't think much about it; it may be well for old people, but there 's time enough yet for us." Or, suppose she had passed it by in silence—then this wall of adamant would have been set up between them, which might never have been broken through. But in her reply she said, "If you have one serious feeling on the subject of religion, I beg that you will cherish it." Now, there is a breach in the wall. In his next he opened his heart frankly, and so did she, and they mutually brought each other to Christ before they met again.

BE FRANK. Grieve not the Spirit by concealing or denying its influence, and thus shutting up your heart. Remember,

> "Those who on earth confess him,
> He will in heaven confess,
> And faithful hearts who bless him
> He will for ever bless."

8. It may be you are making some reservation.

There is some little thing you are not willing to give up, or some duty you are not willing to perform, and thus you raise an issue with God. You will not go to a prayer-meeting in a certain place, or to an inquiry-meeting, or to your pastor. There is some wrong you have done, which you will not redress or acknowledge. You may be conscious what this thing is, and so have a direct known issue with God; or you may not be conscious what it is.

I once knew an estimable lady, who attended the inquiry-meeting night after night, and professed willingness to give up all for Christ, yet she made no progress. She remained so long in this critical and perilous condition that her pastor became alarmed for her, and went to see her at her home, where he could inquire more particularly about her, but he could learn nothing. After earnest prayer he started to leave and laid his hand on the door knob, when she asked him, "Mr. S——, can any one become a Christian while she cherishes hard feelings towards another?"

The mystery was solved. "No, my dear woman," said he, "she cannot. If you do not forgive your fellow-servant five hundred pence, how can you expect God to forgive you ten thousand talents?"

That night she came to the inquiry-meeting with a shining face. She had held a grudge laid up in her heart against a neighbor. They had not spoken together for years. As soon as her pastor left her, she took her bonnet and went over, confessed her fault, and sought reconciliation; the two buried it all, and Jesus came down at once and entered into her heart.

In another place, I heard a man who had been a town officer, out in his barn, pleading earnestly with God for pardon. I went in and said to his wife, "I think your husband will soon be rejoicing; I hear him praying in his barn."

"Oh," said she, "he has been doing that for six weeks; I have often heard him wrestling with God out there."

At the meeting that night I took up this matter of forgiveness and confession. The next day I overtook him in the road with

his team. With a radiant face he said to me,

"I have taken up a great cross to-day, and have got a great blessing. I had trouble with one of the town board, and I went over three miles this morning to see him—confessed my fault and forgave him, and now Jesus has forgiven me. I almost wish there was somebody else against whom I had hard feelings, that I might get another blessing."

There is a world of meaning in those words of Jesus, "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." These selfish, proud, jealous hearts perhaps more frequently bar out the Saviour by an unforgiving spirit than by any other form of evil. Any unchristian temper, or shrinking from any cross, will keep the soul in darkness and bondage.

9. Possibly you are ready to say: "I am distracted with doubts about the whole matter: whether the Bible is true; sometimes even whether there is a God, or a hereafter."

I recently met a talented and educated young lawyer in an inquiry-meeting, in just that state of mind. To the question: "Where are you this evening?" He replied, "I don't

know where I am; I am all afloat. I don't know as I believe anything. I doubt whether there is a God."

"That is not a very pleasant state to be in, is it?"

"No, it is not."

"Well, Jesus tells you just how you may find out."

"How is it?"

"He says, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine; whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' You have only to give yourself up to do the will of Jesus, unconditionally, and you shall know. Don't wait to remove those skeptical feelings by theoretical research. It may be a long and tedious process, and leave you at best only with a belief of the truth; but give yourself up to follow Christ unreservedly, and you shall know; you shall have the consciousness in your own soul, that the gospel is of God. Is it not worth trying?"

"Yes, it is."

"Will you do it, and do it at once?"

After a few moments' reflection, "Yes, I will try to do it."

The next evening he rose in the prayer-meeting and said: "My friends, I want you to pray for me. I have come to the determination to give myself up to the service of God, but I see no light; my heart is hard and I have no evidence that Christ is my Saviour."

Several evenings in succession he renewed that request in the same state. But soon deliverance came; the words of Jesus were verified, and he knew by sweet experience that the "doctrine was of God."

So may you know. Do not wait to weigh evidence and probabilities, and perplex yourself with difficulties; but repose *trust* enough in Christ to start, in yielding obedience to him, and you shall soon know. Every duty he enjoins commends itself to your conscience and heart; it is only to love him who is infinitely lovely, with all your heart, and to love and bless everybody; and you shall know that Christ Jesus is a Saviour, and that you are "in him."

10. You may be making your inquiry too much a matter of the intellect, instead of the heart and life.

An educated gentleman of excellent moral

character, recently said in a crowded meeting:

"My friends, my pastor told me last night he thought I did not rise here because I was ashamed; but that is not the reason. I have risen to-night, to show you that I am not ashamed to have it known that I need religion; but I am groping in the dark. I can't find God. I have prayed and prayed, but it seems to me there is nobody there. Will you pray for me?"

The next night he made substantially the same statement and request. The third evening he rose and said: "My friends, I have risen here twice from a sense of duty, when it was very painful; but to-night I could hardly wait for an opportunity. I have found God. I want you to rejoice with me. I have seen into heaven. I have had a taste of its glories in my soul.

"And now I see where my difficulty has been. I have been standing within one step of heaven all my life, and did not know it. I have been trying to find out God by my own wisdom, to reason myself into the truth and into religion—instead of simply believing and

obeying. I have been trying to demonstrate and prove everything. Now I have learned that what was wanted was to *trust in Jesus*, and do the things he says. Just as soon as I gave myself up, like a little child, I found the Saviour, and oh, how precious he is."

11. "I am too great a sinner. Others may be forgiven; but I have sinned so long, and against such light, that I do not see how God can forgive me."

Remember the words of Jesus: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Great sinners, "the chief of sinners." If you repent, Jesus will save. There is no other limitation. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made like snow;" "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The greater the sin, the greater the glory of his pardoning grace.

12. "I fear it is too late. There was a time when I might have become a Christian; but I resisted the call. If I could only feel as I did once, I would go to Jesus."

There certainly is a time when God abandons the obstinate sinner, and when Jesus says to him, "Oh, that thou hadst known, in

this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." It is a fearful crisis, and one that every delaying sinner is in danger of passing. But note; the very existence of this apprehension is good evidence that the crisis has not passed in your case. Those whom the Spirit of God leaves are usually reckless, indifferent, or bitter in hostility; not disposed to inquire or seek after God. And then you cannot possibly *know* that it is too late; and the fear of danger is a stimulus to greater effort. Let this apprehension rouse you to more earnest and instant action; not waiting for those *tender sensibilities* you formerly had. This insensibility is one of the sad effects of grieving the Spirit. You may never again feel as you once did; but *go as you are*, with your hard heart, and Jesus will take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. It is not for you to make your heart tender; but give it up to Jesus as it is, and he will change it.

III.

The Way to God.

And now, laying aside all excuses, let me beg of you to take the example of the Prodigal Son Jesus has given in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, and come home to God. There are *three steps* which resulted in the restoration of that young man to his father's favor.

1. Calm and honest reflection. "When he came to himself." That step you have taken.

2. A fixed and resolute purpose. "I will arise and go."

Note how firm and unconditional: "I WILL." Nothing else would have brought him home. If he had said, "I wish I was at home; I want to be reconciled to my father; I am willing to yield myself to him," that would not have availed. Or if he had said, "I would arise and go, but I don't know as I shall hold out;" or, "I don't know as he will receive me;" or, "I am so ragged;" or, "If I could find some private road to take." No, but "I WILL."

You may be disposed to say with many others, "I dare not promise. I am afraid I shall fail." But you *must determine.* You never did anything without determining to do it; much less may you expect to get home to God, through all the besetments of the world and snares of the evil one, without it. Arise, then, and go, saying, "Father, I have sinned, and am not worthy to be owned a child; make me a servant." Go with a broken and contrite heart, submitting itself entirely to God, and a new purpose in life—to please and honor him.

3. The final and effectual step, the execution of the resolution: "And *he arose and came.*"

He started at once; took the first step, and then the next, till he came in sight. Here is where the sinner very often fails. You have *resolved* again and again, till you have lost all confidence in your resolutions. By the open grave, or in some tempest, or under some sermon, you have resolved, but you did not execute, and so you took back all your resolutions. If that purpose is fixed in your heart, go and tell Jesus, and then tell it to others,

and do the first Christian duty set before you, and then the next, and so on; and ere you are aware, a Father's arms of love will be about you, and his kiss of reconciliation on your cheek.

And oh, how cordial and blessed the welcome home! The father "ran to meet him;" and when he saw the evidences of a broken heart, he showered upon him assurances of forgiveness and welcome. That only stimulated the son to a more earnest confession; but the father cut it short with the command: "Bring the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and proclaim a feast; for this my son was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."

It may seem strange that Jesus should mention so trifling a thing as a *ring* in this connection; but it is one of the most graphic and significant incidents in the scene.

General Rice, whose own blood was soon after poured out on the battle-field, relates this incident: The army of the Potomac had been some time in camp, and they had a large prayer-meeting tent, where they met for worship. Among those who took an active part

in those meetings was an orderly-sergeant. At length they were called into battle, and after the conflict the general rode over the field to see whom he could relieve. Among the wounded he came to this orderly. He dismounted, and going up to him found him rapidly bleeding to death. Said he:

"Sergeant, you will soon go into bivouac."

"How!" said he; "shall we encamp so early?"

"Yes, you will soon pitch your tent.'

Then he began to understand him. "Do you mean that I am about to die?"

"Yes, you are dying now."

His eye kindled with a heavenly smile as he replied: "Well, thanks be to God, I am ready; and I am glad to die for my country."

Then he drew a ring from his finger, and kissed it, and handed it to the general, saying, "I wish you would take that and send it to my mother, and tell her that her son blessed her memory in dying."

Then he took another ring from his finger, and kissed it, and said: "Send that to her to whom my heart was betrothed, and tell her

to come to me in heaven." And so he died. How precious were those rings! Memorials of dying love! "Put a ring on his hand," says Jesus. Let the poor sinner know that he is not only forgiven, but loved; that he is received into covenant by One whose love "many waters cannot quench, nor floods drown;" One who was glad to die for sinners. "He took the cup and *gave thanks;*" the cup containing the memorial of his blood, to be shed on the following day. Would you have the seal of that everlasting covenant bestowed upon you? Would you be borne on the heart of Him who died for your redemption before the throne of God? Come to Him, and come NOW.

A man was seen kneeling in tears before the headboard at one of our soldiers' graves. "Why do you weep there?" inquired a passing stranger.

"O sir," said he, "I was drafted for the army. I was poor, unable to provide a substitute. I had a family of little children dependent upon me. I was in great distress. This young man, my neighbor's son, came to me, and said:

"'You are a father and a husband, and are greatly needed here. I will take your place, and go for you.' And he went, without bounty or reward; and in his first battle he was killed! And I have come three hundred miles to try and find his grave, and here it is."

They looked upon the humble board and saw the young man's name, and beneath it the grateful neighbor had cut in with his knife the words:

"HE DIED FOR ME."

Go to the cross of Jesus, and with a bro ken, grateful heart inscribe upon it:

"HE DIED FOR ME!"

and make the consecration in the language of the beautiful hymn:

"Alas! and did *my* Saviour bleed,
And did *my* Sovereign die!
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as *I?*

"Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!

"Well might I hide my blushing face,
While his dear cross appears;
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt mine eyes in tears.

"But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away—
'Tis all that I can do."

Here make your own consecration to Christ. "Amen, and Amen."

COUNSELS

TO CONVERTS.

I.

The Christian.

You now trust that you have made the consecration of yourself to Christ, and cherish a hope, it may be with trembling, that he has accepted you. You feel that you are but a babe in Christ, and need to be taken by the hand and led, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the right way.

You hope you are a Christian. Let us pause a moment on the threshold, and consider what is implied in this hope.

1. You belong to Christ.

He has bought you with a price. You are

no longer your own. You are one with him—one in spirit, one in object—one with him as he is one with the Father. What a fellowship!

2. You are a soldier of Christ.

You have enlisted under the banner of the cross, and are entering on the good fight of faith. You are a soldier in time of war. There are foes within and foes without for you to encounter. You have a heavenly armor of defence and offence to put on, and all the tactics of this spiritual warfare to learn. Your qualities as a soldier will be tried before you get your crown.

3. If you are a Christian, then you are a disciple—a learner in the school of Christ.

You are to begin with first principles, and go on unto high attainments in the things which "angels desire to look into." It is one of the glories of the gospel that, while its essential principles are such as the little child or the most untutored mind can comprehend, it reaches out to a development of God and divine things utterly unfathomable to the mightiest intellect, and which will afford full scope for the expanding soul FOR EVER.

4. If you are a Christian, then you are a child of God.

And if a child, then an heir of God, and joint heir with Jesus Christ. All things in heaven and earth are yours. You have not yet received your inheritance; but you will ere long possess "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

5. If you are a Christian, then you have the same mission with Christ.

You are "to preach the gospel to the poor; to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Your life is to be a labor of love. To bless everybody, to glorify God, that is your mission.

II.

Unreasonable Hopes.

So blessed is it to be a Christian! And much of that blessedness consists in HOPE. You have a precious foretaste now; but "we are saved by hope"—a glorious expectation of future good.

Many high expectations are raised only to end in disappointment. Men have had strong and apparently fair hopes of wealth and preferment, which have been sadly blighted; and many a hope of heaven has been found at last only as a "spider's web;" but there is a hope which is "an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil." What is the ground of that hope?

It would seem that there could be no room for uncertainty or mistake on this momentous question. Can one pass from death to life, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, without unmistakable evi-

dence of the fact? It would seem impossible, yet it is true that most persons are in doubt, and agitated with painful fears as to the genuineness of their hope. And further, it is true that the *degree* of doubt and fear does not always correspond with the *occasion* for it. Some are exceedingly fearful of themselves who have the least reason for fear; and others are full of confidence when they have little ground for confidence. But it is occasion of gratitude to God, that whatever may be the cause of this uncertainty, it is not from any indistinctness in the teachings of his word. He has given plain and simple tests by which we may determine whether we are Christ's or not.

The apostle Peter says: "Be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." 1 Pet. 3:15. This distinctly implies that there *is* a good reason for every Christian hope; that it is a reason which may always be given; that any one who chooses has a right to inquire for it; and that every Christian should be ready at all times meekly to answer such an inquiry.

The great truth which it teaches is that the Christian hope is *a reasonable hope.*

Two things are necessary to make any hope reasonable: the object hoped for must be reasonable in itself; and the means employed to secure the end must be reasonable means.

That the hope of heaven is reasonable, all admit. That there is a place of perfect harmony and blessedness, where God reigns, and suffering and death are unknown, is reasonable; and that beings like us, capable of knowing and loving and serving such a God, should be able and be permitted to enjoy his presence, is reasonable. But how many are wishing to behold that glory, and hoping to receive it as their portion, who are making no reasonable efforts to secure it.

There is a class of hopes which can have NO SAVING QUALITY in them.

One of these is a strict observance of the rites and ceremonies of the church. This may be done—has been done by millions, without any true preparation of the heart to commune with Christ.

Another is a reliance on moral reformation, which, though in itself essential, is not saving.

It cannot be admitted as a ground of acquittal and justification, that the criminal most sincerely protests that he will not repeat the crime. A debt is not paid by the fixed purpose not to go in debt any more. Sins past cannot be forgiven on the mere purpose of reformation. There must be some adjustment of offences already committed.

Others are trusting to the infinite goodness of God. He is too good, they think, to punish the creatures whom he has made. True, God is good; but the better he is, the more terrible is sin, and the more fearful its condemnation to them who persist in it. God will say to such: "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee. Thou knewest that I was good? Why did not that goodness lead thee to repentance and love?"

Others are hoping for heaven because they are doing as well as many church members; forgetting that God looks at the heart, and that there are hypocrites in the church who will never enter heaven.

Some are trusting to the fact that many years ago they had "a wonderful experience." They saw, or heard, or dreamed strange

things, and from that time felt happy, and so hope they are Christians. All this might or might not occur in connection with a true conversion. It should not be relied on as a ground of hope; nor should any one question his own piety because he was never the subject of such marvellous experience.

In times of great religious excitement, strange bodily and mental phenomena sometimes occur both in Christians and irreligious persons. They swoon away perhaps, and lie unconscious, and wake up calm and peaceful, and call it conversion. The body is thrown into convulsions and the mind into ecstacies beyond control. This may be in connection with the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart; but in many cases it soon passes away, and leaves the soul harder than before. It is no reliable ground of hope.

III.

Reasonable Hopes.

What, then, will you say to those who ask you a reason of the hope that is in you?

1. You may say, "I hope for heaven, because I do love Jesus, and trust in him as my Saviour and Redeemer. I accept his righteousness as the ground of my forgiveness, and rely upon his sufferings and death as an atonement for my sins. I feel that I am one with him: one in heart, one in purpose, one in every desire. His ways are ways of pleasantness to me. And I have a sweet consciousness that he is mine and I am his."

This is a reasonable ground of hope. It embraces a reasonable ground of forgiveness for the past. Christ has taken our place under the penalty of a broken law, and now God can be just and yet justify every one that believeth in him.

The sinner whose heart is melted at the

love of Jesus and filled with adoring gratitude for what he has done, is also by Divine grace prepared to be admitted to the society of heaven. These are the two elements of a reasonable hope, forgiveness for the past, and fitness for the future.

It would be unreasonable to hope for personal benefit from the redemption of Christ, without a personal acceptance of it, and devotion of heart and life to his service. But if you have the blessed consciousness that you are one with him as he is one with the Father, you may reasonably hope. "Every one that loveth is born of God." "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

2. But, good and sufficient as this reason is, there is need of another; for this could not always be given, even by the true Christian. He is not always able to say, "I have the conscious love of Christ in exercise in my heart." He may say, "There are times when he is to me the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; but sometimes my heart is hard and unfeeling, and darkness and gloom encompass me on every side;

what ground of hope then can there be for me?"

This has indeed been the great inquiry of the trembling Christian in all ages; and we have reason to thank God that he has not left it to the uncertainty of any particular frame of feeling at any specified time, for then we should be continually tossed about and perplexed. Various circumstances may produce a state of mental darkness, over some of which we have no direct control, and which we cannot remove at will.

The neglect of some known religious duty may forfeit the light of the Saviour's face. You are walking by the side of an impenitent friend, and feel that you ought to speak to him of his eternal interests; but it is a great cross, and you shrink from it, and Jesus withdraws his smiles; your way is dark and your heart hard, and you say, "I doubt whether I ever knew what religion is." Or, you are conscious of some wrong that ought to be confessed, but your proud heart revolts from it; or you are withholding some of the tithes God requires.

Or you may have fallen before some fierce

temptation, and sinned against God, secretly or openly: then till you repent and turn to God with a broken heart, and do your first works, you will feel like a convicted sinner—perhaps more intensely than at the time of your first conversion. Look at David in the 51st Psalm. He was a man after God's own heart; but in an evil hour he fell into grievous sin, and as the consequence, into utter darkness; and oh, the agony of his soul! He could only cry out, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness—against thee, thee only have I sinned—cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." That joy was gone, and only by this broken-hearted confession could he find deliverance. So the indulgence of any sin will make it impossible for the Christian to say, "I do feel the love of Christ in my heart."

These sources of darkness may be removed, but there are others beyond our reach, and which can only be borne.

Disease is often a source of spiritual darkness. There are diseases of the body, so

connected with the nervous system, and through that with the sensibilities, as to render any pleasurable sensations impracticable, and prevent any conscious exercise of love as an emotion. Some of these diseases are acute and transient, and some are chronic and abiding. The writer well remembers how, more than once, soon after he had entered the Christian life, a horror of great darkness came over him. It seemed as though there was no love to God or man in his heart, and despair settled down upon the soul. But presently a paroxysm of sick headache came on, and after a few hours of intense bodily suffering, the cloud was removed, and the spiritual sun shone in its brightness. He soon learned to say, when the shadows came over him, "Now I am going to have the headache, and I will lie passively, without questioning whether I am a Christian or not, till it is passed." Thus any acute bodily disease may shut out the light of God, and no repenting, or self-accusation, or renewal of vows will bring back the consciousness of love, till the physical difficulty is removed.

Then there are chronic diseases, more diffi-

cult to detect and impossible to remove, that produce the same results. This was doubtless the case with Cowper—pouring forth the most touching Christian sentiments from his lyre, while his own soul was racked with the agonies of despair. In like manner many of the most devoted servants of Christ—in private life, and in the ministry—have sunk beneath the weight of agonizing disease—excruciating to the soul, though perhaps with little apparent physical suffering. Some have been left to die in the agonies of despair, and some to sever with their own hand the thread of life. So fell one of the most gifted of our age—one who could analyze the rocks and make them testify for God; and search into the arcana of nature; but could not detect or resist this terrible frenzy of the soul. One morning he was found dead, with a discharged pistol by his side, and this little memorandum on his table:

"DEAREST LYDIA: My brain burns; I must have walked a long way. A fearful dream rises upon me. I cannot bear the horrible thought. God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me! My brain burns

as the recollection grows. Dearest wife, farewell. "HUGH MILLER."

"Reason outsoared itself. His mind, consumed
By its volcanic fire, is frantic driven;
He dreamed himself in hell, and woke in heaven."

With many, these seasons of despondency are *occasional*, of more or less frequency and duration, intermingled with sunshine; but sometimes they are *constant*. One of the best Christians within the knowledge of the writer, a mother in Israel, and a mother of several distinguished ministers, has walked in darkness for more than thirty years. During several years of almost daily intimacy, I do not remember ever leaving her house but she followed me to the door with the earnest entreaty, "Dear pastor, do pray that I may become a good Christian." No persuasion, no Scriptural argument would prevail to induce her to hope for herself; and why? Because she is walking with God in the dark. No consideration would tempt her to depart from Christian duty, though apparently never acknowledged of Jesus. I have often stood in wonder and admiration at her constancy. Her difficulty is an affection of the spine which

precludes the possibility of normal sensibilities. As a talented young son of high standing in the ministry was carried home and died in her chamber, she hardly manifested the sensibilities of a mother. When all is thus dark, and the cloud obscures earth and heaven alike, the aid of the physician is needed, rather than of the minister.

I dwell upon this point, because it has been little understood, and multitudes have gone mourning through life, paralyzed to Christian activity and trembling with apprehension from unreasonable doubts. It is no ground of doubt in regard to the genuineness of Christian character, that the soul is sometimes dark. It is a great calamity; but it may proceed from causes over which we have no direct control; and one who is subject to this affliction is hardly more responsible or blameworthy for not discerning and enjoying the beauty there is in Jesus, than a man without eyes, or with eyes diseased, for not enjoying the beauties of a landscape.

IV.

A Reason that can Always be Given.

But there is a reason which can always be given; one so frequently presented by Jesus and the apostles that it is strange that we should ever look for any other, and so plain and simple that none need to misunderstand or be in doubt. Genuine religion of the heart produces *a godly life*. Where this exists you need look no farther for proof of a good hope. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," says Jesus, "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" as teachable, as submissive, as trusting, as loving, as sensible of helplessness and dependence, as willing to be led by the hand. Take the instructions the apostle John gives to young converts in the second chapter of his first epistle. "My little children," a term characteristic of the true Christian, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that

ye sin not." But instantly, knowing that they had already sinned, he adds, under the inspiration of God, "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous."

Here are two very important points:

First, if sensible of remaining or reviving sin, do not abandon your hope on that account.

Perhaps you thought that, if you were converted, you would never be troubled any more with sin. And for some time sinful inclinations seemed to be slain, and you thought they would never revive. But they were only stunned, and you are astonished to find them returning to life. An evil temper, a vicious appetite, a wrong desire has sprung up in your heart: the "unruly" tongue has led you into sin, and in an evil hour you have soiled the beautiful garment which Christ had wrapped about you. But a consciousness of sin is no ground of doubt. Sin is not slain in the Christian, a warfare is yet to be maintained with it. It is a deep-seated disease, from which you are only beginning to recover.

But, secondly, what will you do with this consciousness of sin? "We have an Advocate with the Father," says the apostle. Take it right to Jesus, and have it washed away. This is counsel of incalculable importance. The almost irresistible tendency, when conscious that sin has gained an advantage over us, is to try to hide it till the consciousness of guilt is blunted, the act measurably forgotten, and self-confidence and self-respect restored. It may seem unspeakably mean, as the devoted McCheyne says of himself, to go right to Jesus, all reeking with guilt; but this is the grand secret of Christian consolation and progress.

Here, for illustration, is a little daughter. In her heedlessness she has knocked a beautiful vase from the mantel, and broken it in pieces. She is filled with consternation and self-reproach, and cries out, "What shall I do? Mother sets a great deal by that vase, and she will be very angry with me." There are two things she can do.

She can gather up the pieces in her apron, and take them slyly around the corner of the house, and throw them away, saying, "It will

be some days before she will find it out, and when the discovery is made I will do the best I can to pacify her. I will not tell a wrong story, but I will say nothing about it." Now there is a wall between her and her mother. She cannot look upon her with comfort. She cannot enjoy her smiles or caresses. There is a burden on her heart, only increased by maternal tenderness and love. And there that burden will lie as long as that wrong remains upon her conscience, growing heavier and heavier.

The other way is: she may gather up the pieces and take them directly to her mother, and say, "Mother, look here; see what I have done! It was very careless in me. I am sorry for it. Will you forgive me?" The mother's heart and arms are open instantly to receive her. Such an acknowledgment is worth a thousand vases. The child is dearer to her than ever before, and their hearts are bound together with new ties of sympathy and confidence.

So with the child of God. If you are conscious of having offended him, do not wait, and think it will be easier or more consistent

to seek forgiveness after a while; but go at once to Jesus, the Advocate, with humble confession, and have it taken away. Do not suffer this secret, confiding communication between you and God to be interrupted. It will bind you closer to his heart.

Now the apostle comes to the main point that we have before us: How may you know you are a Christian? "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Here is the same thing repeated again and again in varied forms: and how plain and simple the rule, and in what perfect accordance with all our convictions.

If you wish to know whether a son loves his father or mother, you instinctively look to see if he is trying to do their will. You see a daughter denying herself, foregoing youthful gratification, and toiling earnestly to light-

en the burdens of her mother: you cannot doubt her love.

Here is a young husband and wife. They have lived very happily together for years, and while he has been toiling in the shop, she has cared for his comfort at home. He does not need to get out and read over her old letters, to see if her heart is right with him. The best proof of love she can give is to provide for his comfort, to meet him at the door, and welcome his return, and show her love by her looks and acts as she has always done. He is satisfied with that.

And such is the proof of love to God—to run with delight to do his will. So Jesus says, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them," is like a man who built upon a rock. And again: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." And again: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him." So in multitudes of other passages. Cheerful, child-like, hearty

obedience is the evidence of faith and of discipleship.

What will you say then, to one who asks the reason of the hope that is in you?

"I hope for heaven, because I am *trying to be like Jesus*, to walk as he walked, to do his will. I am conscious of failure. I come short in all things; but God knows I am trying to do his will. Sometimes it is delightful, and sometimes my heart is sluggish and hard, and the way seems dark; but at all times, in darkness and in light, I am trying to do the will of God."

This was beautifully illustrated recently, in the case of a deaf and dumb young man. He had been taught the sign language, and to read and write. During a series of meetings his attention was arrested, while the young people around were flocking to Christ; and though he had never heard a sermon or a prayer, or a Christian experience, and knew not how others were feeling, yet the Spirit led him to sweet hope and trust in Jesus.

After walking some days in the light, happy in the conscious love of Christ, he fell into the slough of Despond, which, although many

more cartloads of good instruction have been thrown in since the days of Bunyan, has not yet been filled up. He was greatly alarmed, for he never had heard that others have the same trial, and he could not converse with us; but he worked his way through and came out on the right side. Then he signified to us where he had been and what he did. Said he:

"When I fell into darkness I was greatly troubled, and hardly knew what to do; but I thought I was like a traveller on a journey. The road is before him, and sometimes the sun shines upon it and it is bright and pleasant, and at other times clouds overshadow it and it is dark; but the road is there, and he has nothing to do but keep in the road and travel on through sunshine and through shade. So I determined to walk in the road God had laid down in his word, if it was dark, and I soon came into the light again."

No doctor of divinity could improve upon the decision of that deaf and dumb young man, taught as he was by the Spirit of God. And so I would say to every young disciple: Here is the road; it is strait and narrow—

God has cast it up—the king's highway of holiness, which "the lion's whelp hath not trod," and "the vulture's eye hath not seen." Walk in it. In sunshine and in shade; when the heart glows with seraphic love, and when it seems like the adamantine rock, walk in it. So that, always, when one shall ask you the reason of your hope, you can say without hesitation, "I am trying to please Jesus—to walk as he walked." No ecstacy of joy, no thrill of conscious love, no memory of marvellous experience in the past, no sights, or sounds, or supernatural revelations, can supersede or compare with this as the reason of the hope that is in you.

"THE FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE." From the above statement, it is easy to see how to attain to entire confidence of spiritual safety. If salvation were suspended on the constant exercise of certain emotions, every one would be sometimes compelled to doubt; for those emotions vary, and are not subject to our control. We may desire them ever so earnestly, they do not heed our wishes. We may command them ever so resolutely, they do not obey our will. We may reproach ourselves

ever so severely, they are not born of self-reproach. We may inflict any kind or degree of self-torture, they are not the offspring of penance. They are sometimes governed by influences beyond our control and destitute of any moral character.

But if a principle of cheerful obedience to God, a solemn purpose of conformity to him, is the ground of hope, then we may make that ground firm by fixing the purpose of obedience. That is under our control, and for that we are responsible. If that is weak and vacillating, yielding to temptation here, compromising with the world there, then we have reason to doubt and tremble. But if we can look up with humble confidence, and say: "Lord, thou knowest that I am trying to do thy will, only let me know what it is; I do commit myself to thee without reserve, to be thine for ever;" we may rest in full assurance of hope, and hear the voice of Jesus saying: "None shall pluck you out of my hand."

V.

The Christian Armor—Faith.

Having settled the fact that you have enlisted under the banner of Jesus, put on the armor God has furnished you for every emergency of the service. Paul comprehends it all in one, when he says: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Here is the whole armor of God. But in Eph. 6:11–18, he has specified the material parts of it.

"Having your loins girt about with truth:" truthfulness, sincerity, no pretence, no seeming to be what you are not. That must gird you for the warfare.

"The breastplate of righteousness:" conscious justification by the merits of Christ; and conscious effort to be righteous, even as He is righteous."

"Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."

"Above all taking the shield of faith," and "the helmet of salvation." A conscious, present salvation; freedom from condemnation: "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and there is the "hope" of final and perfect deliverance.

"The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

Here is an armor of defence and offence, sufficient for every emergency. It would be profitable to enlarge upon every piece of it; but we can only dwell upon a few points.

"*The Shield of Faith.*" This the apostle pronounces as "above all." Those who are fully clothed with it are invulnerable to every weapon of the adversary, and nerved for victory over every foe. By this shall you measure the extent of your achievements in the Christian life. Jesus, when on earth, "could do no mighty work" in some places because of their unbelief; while in others he could do all things needed. Let us then consider what this faith is, and how it may be strengthened.

1. What is this faith, which is such a shield? It is simply trust in God, which

ventures on Him. Not a mere assent to the truth; but a reception of it that puts it in force. So, when Jesus came to Gennesaret, where they had faith in him, they manifested it by running through all the region, gathering up all who needed help, and laying them in the road where he was to pass; and all, as many as touched the border of his garment, were healed. So now; the faith that saves, is faith that goes forward relying simply on the word of God. It seems strange to call it venturing on him; for what venture can there be in believing God? But the term is used merely to indicate the feeling of the believer. It seems to him as though it were a venture. So it is with the first act of the Christian life—the yielding of the soul into the hands of Jesus. Beautiful and safe as it appears when once it has been done, yet the act of letting go all other dependencies, and falling into his arms, trusting only to his word, "Come to me and I will give you rest," seemed to be a great venture.

And so do subsequent acts of faith. When Moses went into the presence of Pharaoh, when the Israelites marched forward into the

Red sea before its waters were divided, and in multitudes of other cases, there was doubtless a feeling of hazard; yet they went and found it safe.

So now; faith will be serviceable to you just in proportion as you throw yourself on God's promises and declarations, and go forward. It is, therefore, of infinite moment to you, in this beginning of your Christian life, to continue and increase in this course of venturing on God.

A few men stand out before us, in the history of redemption, as wonders in this respect. We read of Noah, toiling patiently for one hundred and twenty years, to build a ship on the dry land, amid the scoffs and sneers of an ungodly generation, not a cloud in sight nor a quivering of the earth, simply because God had said to him, "The end of all flesh is come before me. Build an ark wherein thou mayest be saved, for I will bring a flood upon the earth."

We wonder at Abraham, as he takes "the son of promise" and leads him up mount Moriah with the glittering knife in his hand. "Father," says the artless lad, "behold the

fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Not a tremor in his voice as he replies, "God will furnish himself a lamb, my son."

We read of Moses, and Gideon, and Elijah, of apostles and martyrs, and in modern days of Luther and Oberlin and Franké and Schilling and Müller, and think they are prodigies—that there was something exceptional in their case beyond the reach of ordinary men. But the only wonder in their case is that they believed God. It was the legitimate growth of faith. So far from being prodigies they were simply men; and we are pigmies—dwarfed by unbelief. Every one of us may and ought to attain to such a stature of faith. It is a vital question, therefore,

2. How shall your faith be strengthened? Let me name several ways:

Ask for it. Think how worthy of confidence God is, and pray, "Lord, help my unbelief." "Lord, increase my faith."

But prayer alone is not sufficient; we often ask, and do not receive, because while neglecting duty we expect God to produce it directly in our hearts.

Cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with God. You cannot trust a stranger. He may be perfectly reliable, but you do not know it, consequently you dare not confide in him. But your confidence will be increased in one worthy to be trusted, just in proportion as you know his heart. Confidence in men may become so firm in this way, that life itself is intrusted to them without a fear.

A naturalist in Scotland, out in pursuit of specimens in botany, discovered a beautiful flower deep down in the crevice of a ledge beyond his reach. A poor peasant boy came along; and holding out a piece of silver to him, he said: "I will give you this, if you will let me put a rope round you and lower you down, so that you can pick that flower for me." The little fellow eyed him closely, and eyed the coveted silver; but he answered:

"I dinna ken ye, sir. If my father 'll come and hold the rope, I 'll go doon."

So the father came and fastened the rope about him, and dropped him over the ledge, and there he hung in mid air, over the deep abyss without a fear, because he knew the

heart that held the rope. Get close to the heart of God, till you feel a father's heart beating against your heart, and you cannot doubt him, or fear to go where he directs.

BE VERY CAREFUL TO PLEASE GOD IN ALL THINGS. A whole-hearted obedience will go far to confirm your faith. "If our own hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." And it is impossible to feel that confidence while disobedient or forgetful of his wishes. But the great source of growth in faith is,

Use what you have. It grows chiefly by exercise, and withers by disuse. This is the great secret by which the few have attained to such a soaring faith, and the grand distinction between them and ordinary Christians.

Look, for instance, at David. His father sent him down to the army with extra rations for his brothers and a present for their captain, and to inquire how went the battle. Just as he arrived, the great Goliath of Gath came out and defied the armies of Israel, and they fled before him in consternation.

"Why," said David, "who is this uncircumcised Philistine? I will go and fight with him."

And they brought him to Saul; and David said to the king, "Let no man's heart fail him because of this Philistine. Thy servant will go and slay him."

"No," said the king, "you can't do it. You are but a boy, and he is a man of war from his youth."

"Yes, I can," said David.

"How do you know?" said the king.

"Why, thy servant was keeping his father's sheep in the wilderness, and there came a bear and took one of my lambs, and I followed after him and caught him and slew him. And there came a lion and seized one of my lambs, and I caught him by the beard and slew him, and delivered the lamb out of his mouth. And now the God who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver this Philistine into my hand."

That was where he got his faith. And he went on from strength to strength; so that he made it a rule, as he records in the 116th

Psalm, "Because He hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." But we are inclined, when we have exercised a little confidence in God and experienced something of his faithfulness, to bring a momentary tribute of thanks, and then forget it, instead of making it a foundation for stronger trust and larger ventures.

That was the secret of the marvellous faith of Abraham on Mount Moriah. It was the out-growth of a life of trust, wherein he had followed the voice of God, till it had become so strong, that Paul says he believed God would fulfil his promise, even if he had to raise his son from the dead. And so with every one of those who have attained to such amazing faith in ancient or modern times.

The institution on Bristol downs is looked upon with admiration, and has been called "the Bristol miracle;" but it is no miracle: Mr. Müller is a man who believes God and acts upon it. It would indeed be almost a miracle for a man at once, without any means of his own, and without ever asking aid of any one but God, to assume the support of two thousand orphan children, feeding, clothing,

and educating them from year to year, simply by trust in God. But that is not the history. How has Mr. Müller attained to such a stature of faith? Some thirty-five years ago, as he walked the street in Bristol, he saw a poor, friendless orphan boy, and his heart yearned to aid him. He went home and told his wife about it, and asked, "Don't you think we could venture to take that boy into our family, and trust God to enable us to provide for him?" She thought they might. And as they talked it over, they thought they might venture a little farther. So they fitted up a room and gave notice that they would receive six orphan children and take care of them without charge; and they came.

At the end of the year they found themselves just as well off as they were without them. "Well, now," they said, "if God can do that, he can do more." So they enlarged, and made room for seventeen orphans; and without asking aid of any one they came to the close of the year just as well as before. They saw times which sorely tried their faith; sometimes in the morning they had nothing for dinner; but they set the table and went to

their Father in the closet, and food always came. They never wanted any good thing. And so many and so striking were the specific instances of deliverance, that their trust was greatly strengthened and they said, "God can do more just as well;" so they enlarged again for thirty; then for fifty; then for three hundred; then seven hundred and fifty; then eleven hundred, and finally for two thousand. And the testimony of Mr. Müller is, that it is *easier* now for him to believe that God will provide for this great company, than it was when he began to believe He would provide for the six. Vastly as his work has increased, his faith has outgrown his work, founded on the simple declaration of God, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you," and supported by innumerable instances of the Divine faithfulness.

Here is the grand secret of success in the Christian life. Has God done anything for you? Has he ever heard your prayer? Have you ever ventured on him and found him faithful? Venture farther, and keep venturing, till you feel that it is safe.

Alas! Most of us are like a young eaglet, who, after making a few flights from bough to bough, should look out into the broad heavens; and fold his wings, saying, "I can never dare to try and fly up there." We have scarcely begun to soar on the wings of faith.

This is the history of success in revivals, in missionary labor, in all religious progress Three sisters in a church recently began to mourn over the desolation of Zion. For thirty years there had been no refreshing in their congregation. They agreed to select two of their young friends as the subject of special prayer. At the end of four months, they spoke to these friends and found them ready to yield to the Saviour. Immediately they put four more names in the place of those two, and soon these four were trusting in Jesus. Then they enlarged again, and continued to venture, and expect, and labor, till a hundred and fifty, nearly all the adult members of the congregation, were numbered among the children of God.

So may you prevail with God, and go on, from strength to strength. Make the trial at once. Select some dear friend, out of Christ,

and labor for his conversion; and when God has blessed your efforts and heard your prayers, increase your expectations and enlarge the boundaries of your desires, and keep advancing—never stationary, never retrograding, but always advancing; and you will, we doubt not, be amazed at the strength of your faith and its happy results.

VI.

Christian Armor—The Sword of the Spirit.

"The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This is the only weapon of assault in the Christian panoply; and there is great force and beauty in this expression. The word of God is a sword. It cuts, it penetrates, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." There is power and life in that word. It is truth, and truth is mighty. It is infinitely important truth. It is the truth of God, from which there is no appeal, and against which there is no successful resistance.

It is the sword of the Spirit. It is the medium, through which that Divine Agent moves upon the hearts of men; giving resistless power to his declarations. That sword you are to take in your hand and wield it. A sword is of no value in the scabbard. It must

be drawn and skilfully used. Study this divine word carefully. "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate, day and night. He shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water"—shall not know when drought comes. Study it as your book of tactics in the Christian warfare; meditate upon it in the night watches. It shall be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. It shall be honey to your taste. It shall be strength to your arm. It shall give vigor to every fibre of your soul.

Study it, not alone for yourself, but for others. Carry the Testament always in your pocket. Select and mark appropriate passages for any one you may meet. Carry it to the shop, the counter, the field. Whet your sword, as you do your scythe, under the shadow of the great tree. Make it sharp for the heart of the King's enemies. Remember it is not your word, but the word of God, that pierces, and breathe an aspiration to God for the influences of his Spirit that you may wield it effectually.

Let no man wrest it out of your hand. Listen to no plausible speculations of human

philosophy, that would degrade the word of God. If you lose your sword, you will lose your shield, and be utterly in the power of your spiritual foes. For unless the Bible is the word of God, there is no such word, and all foundations are utterly destroyed.

VII.

CHRISTIAN ARMOR—PRAYER.

PRAYER is a weapon, little used in earthly warfare; yet "the battle is the Lord's," and there are not wanting instances where prayer has controlled the issues of war, and decided the destiny of empires. Hezekiah cried to God, and a great deliverance was vouchsafed to him. Washington was not ashamed to be found on his knees in the camp, and we may be more deeply indebted to prayer than to the hero's valor, for all our civil privileges.

In the Christian warfare here is the hiding of your strength. You go not alone to this conflict. "Lo I am with you always," says Jesus. "Ask and ye shall receive." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." In yourself helpless, ignorant, erring, come to God for all you need.

"Praying always." As there is no time,

when you are secure from attack, or not liable to err from the way, there should be no time when the aspiration of your heart is not going up to God for help. Fixed and stated seasons should be observed daily, but the heart should never cease to breathe devotion to God. At work and at rest, at home and abroad, in secular and sacred time, in time of temptation, and when soaring on the mount, in sickness and health, in joy and in grief, "Pray without ceasing."

Pray with "all prayer." In every manner: silently lift up your desires to God, audibly when circumstances permit. In the closet where no ear but God's can hear, and where you can unbosom your most secret desires and wants. In the family where the household bow around the altar. In the social meeting where the people of God are gathered with one accord. For "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them." "If two shall agree, as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them."

Pray in faith, nothing doubting.

Pray with forgiveness. "For if ye forgive

not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

Pray in sweet submission. "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

Pray in the name of Jesus. You and I can have no credit before the throne; but the endorsement of Jesus is good for any amount. Draw through him.

Lift up calm and ordinary prayer for ordinary blessings. But to secure extraordinary blessings come with extraordinary prayer. "The effectual, (energized,) fervent prayer of a righteous man, availeth much." The Bible records many emergencies in which great deliverances were wrought by such prayers. So Jacob prayed, when Esau with his bands of armed men came out in wrath to meet him. He wrestled with the Angel till the break of day, and then said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And the Angel said, "As a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed."

So Moses prayed, when Israel had sinned and God came down in wrath, saying, "I will smite this people with the pestilence and disinheret them, and I will make of thee a great

nation." He remained immoveable and lifted up his cry to God in their behalf; and his prayer availed to save the nation. Num. 14:12.

So Luther prayed, when he stood before the diet of Worms—the whole power of the Empire assembled to crush him. God for a little time seemed to desert him, and overwhelmed with agony he fell on his face upon the ground and cried: "O, Almighty and everlasting God! How terrible is this world! My hour is come. O God! O God! Do help me, against all the wisdom of this world!.... O God! art thou dead! O my God! where art thou!" So he agonized till God appeared; deliverance came, and the Great Reformation was born.

So Jesus prayed, when in the garden he said to the disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And he threw himself upon the ground, and cried, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" And again the second and the third time, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." Being in an agony, his sweat was as

it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. He "was heard in that he feared," and redemption was accomplished.

The history of the world shows that great deliverances have rarely been wrought without a corresponding Gethsemane. If you are ever to effect anything of great importance in Zion, you will experience something of this wrestling in prayer.

Once more, if you would prevail in prayer, you must *do what you can to bring an answer to your own prayer*. You must not ask God to perform your work. The farmer may ask him for fruitful seasons; but he must not ask him to plough his ground or sow his seed. That is the farmer's work, and when he has done that, he may ask God for the rain and the sunshine. So with every spiritual good. "We are workers together with him." If you ask God to deliver you from worldliness, you must not throw yourself into the vortex of worldly business or pleasure, and expect God to interpose and keep your heart, and give you spiritual life. If you pray for the conversion of a friend, use the means God has appointed, and pray that they may be

blessed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Many prayers are not answered, because they are requests for God to do our work, or because we are shrinking from some self-sacrificing duty.

A lady came into a female prayer-meeting and said, "Dear sisters, I can tell you when God will answer our prayers: it will be when we are willing to bear any cross he may lay upon us. Twenty-three years ago I married an impenitent husband. I determined to pray for him every day till he was converted. I continued to do so twenty-one years, without any answer. Two years ago, I brought this prayer: 'Lord, if there is anything I am doing, or neglecting to do, which prevents his conversion, wilt thou show it to me?' I was immediately impressed with the duty of praying with him, but I shrunk from it. The duty became clearer and clearer, but I resisted. At length the impression was overwhelming. I left the lecture-room one night and went home and said: 'Husband, my heart is burdened; are you willing that I should set up a family altar in our house?'

"'Certainly,' said he.

"I commenced. Soon he began to go to the meetings. In two weeks he said: 'Wife, I can endure it no longer; my soul is in an agony. Pray for me.'

"We knelt and prayed, and he gave his heart to Jesus, and is happy in Christ's love."

VIII.

Qualities of the Christian Soldier

We have now surveyed the armor; but armor is not all that is requisite for victory. It must be used. Were this a world of peace, or were there an armistice, you might rest upon your arms. But it is a time and place of conflict. The prince of the power of the air, and all his legions, are contesting every inch of ground, and watching every opportunity for successful assault.

Or, if it were merely a defensive war, you might wait, only carefully watching against an attack. But the war is aggressive. Satan has usurped possession of domains that belong to Prince Immanuel, and is to be dislodged, and his invading forces repelled and driven back. You must be active, if you would please him who has chosen you to be a soldier. Let us then consider the essential requisites for a victorious soldier of the cross.

Some of these we may learn from the his-

tory of the deliverance God wrought for Israel by Gideon; for the principles on which he gives victory to Zion now, are very similar to those upon which he wrought temporal deliverances for his ancient people. Out of the thousands who offered themselves in that conflict, God selected a little handful and said, "By the three hundred men that lapped, will I save you; let all the other people go." What were the peculiarities of those three hundred men?

1. Courage.

God said to Gideon: "Go, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying: 'Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return.'" Under that proclamation twenty-two thousand went home, confessing themselves cowards, while ten thousand remained. Now Gideon was stronger without them than with them: a coward in the day of battle is only an obstacle; a cowardly regiment often puts a whole division to flight. So in the Christian army: God does not use cowardly Christians in bringing victory to Zion. Moral courage is quite as essential to success as physical, and quite as rare and difficult to exercise.

There is many a man who would go fearlessly to the cannon's mouth, who trembles and shrinks from a fearless avowal of his faith in Christ, in the midst of obloquy and reproach. It is easier to stand the rain of shot and shell upon the battle-field, than to endure the scorn and derision of the wicked. How many timid and fearful ones shrink from any positive effort to win a soul to Christ. And this timidity is not confined to the ranks, or to those who were never under fire before. Many a veteran officer upon the walls of Zion trembles in the day of battle.

An aged pastor not long since called on a wealthy parishoner, and said: "Mr. G——, I have called to talk to you about your soul, and I must begin with a confession. I have been seventeen years your pastor and have never spoken to you directly and personally on that subject. I have been afraid of you. I don't know why. You have always been a good parishioner, faithful in all your duties to me; but I have been afraid to speak to you; will you forgive me?"

"Certainly," said he; "but I have thought it strange that you did not speak to me. I have

often wanted you to, and wanted to know what I should do to be saved; and I want to know now."

By this time they were both in tears, and the pastor had only to point him to the Lamb of God; they knelt together beside the sofa, he gave his heart to Christ and is now a pillar in the church. As soon as the pastor had courage to do his duty, victory came; and fifty more of the congregation were soon won in the same way.

The Rev. Dr. Gardiner Spring of New York relates of himself in his autobiography, what no one else ever would have related of him, a similar incident. Once, when he had determined to visit all the families in his congregation, there was a wealthy family in the Fifth avenue, in which was an only daughter. She was beautiful and gay, a leader in fashionable circles, given to worldly pleasure. He thought, "Can I go to that house and meet that fashionable young lady?" He started, and walked half-way there, and his heart failed him, and he turned about and went home. Then he thought, It will never do to give it up. He started the second time;

went up the marble steps and laid his hand on the bell-knob. His heart failed him again, and he turned about and went home the second time. But still the duty was upon him. Conscience would not let him rest; they were his people and he must visit them. So he put on a valorous heart and went, praying along the crowded street, rang the bell and was ushered into the hall, when that beautiful daughter met him, all bathed in tears, seized his hand and exclaimed, "O my dear pastor, I am so glad to see you. I was afraid you were going to pass us by! I want you to tell me what I shall do to be saved!"

We may imagine how the timidity of the venerable pastor was rebuked; and how many thousand times timidity has been rebuked in a similar way, in the experience of others. And alas! in how many thousand more has victory been lost because it was not thus rebuked. And if veteran officers suffer so much from fearfulness, it is not strange that new recruits should suffer from the same cause. But take courage; you can do all things through Christ strengthening you. Do not lose a victory from fearfulness.

2. Endurance.

The soldier's life is not a life of ease. Beds of down are not for the tented field. Hunger and thirst, watchings and wearisome marches and fatigue, as well as danger, are his portion. It is essential to the good soldier, that he be willing to "endure hardness," as well as brave peril.

We see this, in the case of Gideon, in the farther reduction of his army. God directed him to start upon his march, and notice how the people drank. So when they came to a brook, the great body of them lay down by the brook to drink. But here and there one, or perhaps some little Spartan band, to the number of three hundred, rushed into the brook, scooped up what water they could and threw it into their mouth, as a dog laps with his tongue, without halting or slackening their speed, and came out on the other side, marching right on their way. So intent were they on their work that they seem to have been hardly conscious that the rest had stopped. And God said, "By the three hundred men that lapped, will I save you, and let all the rest go home."

Now what was the ground of distinction here? It was the spirit and power of endurance. They were all weary with the march, and thirsty under the scorching sun. And the thousands lay down by the side of the brook to rest, and drink at their leisure and as much as they wanted. But the three hundred were so absorbed in their object—so intent on saving Israel, that they did not regard their weariness or thirst, but pressed on to the accomplishment of their object.

So it is with the soldier of the cross. There are many that will do what is convenient, but they shrink from enduring hardness as good soldiers. They will go to meeting when it is pleasant. They will visit the widow and the fatherless on the Sabbath and when they will lose no worldly advantage, or when they feel like it. They will give of their money when it requires no self-denial, making religion an incidental thing, secondary to other matters.

A soldier, that will hear the call to arms when it does not interfere with harvesting his grain, nor expose him to the cold or wet! Such may gain a starless crown; but let them not expect to accomplish deliverance in Is-

rael. If you would gain a victory for God, you must be willing to suffer loss and privation for his sake.

Jesus illustrates the same principle in reference to the offering of the widow in the temple. "Verily I say unto you, this poor widow hath cast in more than they all." Why did he prize the "mite" of the widow above all their liberal contributions? Because it cost her more. They of their abundance had cast in; she of her penury had cast in all that she had, even all her living.

This is the standard by which Christ judges of our services. Not the amount done, but the spirit manifested in the doing. So he has put it within the reach of the poorest and the humblest of his people to work as effectively as the rich and mighty. And hence we see in the history of the church, that the greater part of its victories have been won by a few. Pray and strive to be one of the "three hundred."

And remember, God may be testing you when you are not conscious of it. The soldiers of Gideon knew nothing of the test appointed for them, till the choice was made. You are

made to pass through trials and temptations and sorrows. Your plans are defeated, your earthly gourds are blasted, and you wonder what it means. God is trying you to see if you will make a good soldier. He is making up a company to storm some strong redoubt, or rout some numerous host; he wants to know whether he can trust you to join them. It is wonderful to see how he proves his men, and fits them for his service in all ages by their enduring hardness. "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom."

Dear reader, make a full consecration of yourself to Christ. Present your body and spirit, a "living sacrifice, holy, acceptable." Fill up the measure of the sufferings of Christ. If you suffer with him you shall also reign with him. You need not wear a starless crown in glory. Endure hardness.

IX.

SUCCESS ASSURED.

A GREAT amount of Christian effort is put forth with but slight manifest results; but there is a way of working, which God has declared shall not fail. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him." Psa. 126:6. Here is a promise of great and immediate results. Let us see how they are to be obtained.

1. You should expect success. You have a right to expect it. You have the positive promise of God. You shall "doubtless," come with sheaves. You have the positive assurances of Jesus, "Lo, I am with you;" "The Comforter shall come to you." The Spirit shall be given. We should expect this. No stream rises higher than the fountain. Achievement seldom, if ever, surpasses expectation. "According to your faith be it unto you."

2. Be wise to understand the times and seasons. There is a "time to sow, and a time to reap." It is not at all times that you may thrust in the sickle. You would not take a heathen, who never heard of Christ, and expect him instantly to repent and believe. The seed must be sown—he must be taught something of Christ. So with those in our own land who have no correct knowledge of the way of salvation. For them, it is now time to sow. But in our congregations and Sabbath-schools, and Christian families, it has been an incessant time of sowing. Year after year we have been sowing, with no set time or definite attempt at reaping, or expectation of a harvest. So we may well hear the words of Jesus: "Say ye not, There are yet four months and then cometh the harvest? Behold! the fields are white already to the harvest." In every community there are those in whose hearts the seed has ripened for the sickle. May God make you wise to find them out.

3. Every Christian is commissioned as a reaper. Do not think the minister or other officer of the church or the Sabbath-school teacher only is authorized to go. "Whoso-

ever:" that includes you, if you are a child of God. There is a place for all, and encouragement for all. And remember, in battle it is not usually the sword of the officer that kills, but the musket in the ranks. And in this Christian warfare, God sometimes employs a little child to overthrow a giant who had withstood the heavier artillery of the pulpit. Let none think themselves too young or too obscure to be successful. There is a place for you.

4. Seek opportunities of working. You are not to wait for sinners to come to you. It is painful to know that many who do come, desirous of finding Jesus, are not directed. A young friend of yours heard that you had become a Christian, and she made an errand to call and see you. When the errand was done, she lingered and seemed sad, and you tried to cheer her; but you never dreamed that she had come with an aching heart, saying within herself, "Now my friend will tell me how to find the Saviour:" she could not open her heart and ask you, so she went away disappointed and discouraged, and perhaps never again will come so near to God.

One of the mightiest intellects of the last generation was lost to the cause of evangelical religion in this way. It is said, that Dr. Wm. E. Channing, when a boy, rode with his grandfather, who was a minister, to an adjoining parish to attend a meeting. He was deeply impressed with the solemn truths presented and said to himself: "Now, while we are riding home, grandfather will tell me all about this and I shall know what to do." They rode all the way home, and the old gentleman, never suspecting the state of his heart, never referred to the sermon or the subject. As they parted, the lad said to himself again: "There is nothing in all this; if there was, my grandfather would certainly have talked to me about it." The boy began to cavil, and turned away farther and farther, till he rejected the doctrines of evangelical religion. Thousands have been turned from the truth or hardened in sin, in the same way. How terrible to think of meeting at the bar of God some poor lost soul, that walked by your side in some endearing relation of life, and hearing from his lips, as he turns away from you into "everlasting punishment," "I called upon

you when you first found Jesus, hoping you would show me the way; but you had nothing to say, and now I must go away from him and heaven for ever."

You are not to wait for those far from God to come to you. He that "goeth forth." Seek them out. "Go out into the highways and hedges," into the lanes and alleys, "and compel them to come in."

Several young men of the Christian Association in Providence, R. I., took their Hymn Books and Testaments, and went into one of the dance-houses. There they found a hundred young men assembled by troops, drinking, smoking, gambling and carousing. They asked:

"May we sing some of our songs to you?"

"Oh yes."

So they sang of Jesus and his love, and of free salvation, and the banks of the beautiful river.

Silence soon reigned. The young men left their gambling and listened. Many a fond memory was stirred, and the seed long sown sprang up.

"Shall we read you from the Testament?"

No objection was made, and they read the old, old story of the cross; and then they knelt and prayed.

The result was, the transformation of the den of abomination into a house of prayer, and the conversion of a large number of the young men to God.

Go out—go "everywhere," as they did that were driven out of Jerusalem, "preaching the word"—testifying of Jesus. Go to the places of concourse: the post-office, as they wait for the mail, the depôt, the corners of the street; go wherever men are to be met, go into the most unlikely places, go to the hardest cases, go to personal friends, go to strangers, to the high and to the lowly. Go wisely, meekly, lovingly, but earnestly, prayerfully; and Jesus will fulfil his promise, "Lo I am with you," and you shall bring sheaves.

5. But the grand requisite is, Go weeping, bearing precious seed. The tender, loving, sympathizing spirit is what gives resistless power to the truth. Here lies the secret of a multitude of failures: we may go, even with the word of God, in so cold and heartless a manner as to repel, rather than attract, and

harden rather than melt; or go with a wild rush of enthusiasm and excitement, without enough of the truth of God to have saving efficacy. It is the blending of these two elements that, under the blessing of the Spirit, saves. "How is it," said a distinguished preacher to Garrick, "that our congregations remain unmoved under the exhibition of the most weighty truths, while yours are convulsed with emotion at the presentation of mere fiction?" "I will tell you," said the great tragedian. "You present the truth as if it were fiction, and we present fiction as if it were truth."

The heart must be opened, before it can be filled. The rain might come down in torrents, it would never fill a sealed bottle. So the best of Christian teaching, if it is not admitted into the heart, is of no avail.

The agents of the Christian commission gave us a lesson on this subject, that I hope will never be forgotten. This was the secret of their wonderful success in bringing sheaves.

There is one of them approaching a wounded soldier. The poor fellow is bleeding to death, and has but a few hours left. At

home, he was a reprobate; never went near the house of God, or regarded his name or his Sabbath. Listen! do you hear the messenger abruptly say, "Man, you have but a few hours to live; you have been an awful sinner, and had better be making your peace with God." No; the dying man would have repelled such an approach with curses, and spurned him away.

But, with flowing tears he says, "My friend, your wounds have not been dressed; let me bathe and dress them for you;" so he binds them up as best he can. "You are very thirsty; let me peel this orange for you." So he puts it gently to his parched lips.

"Now," says he, "your mother does not know of this; let me write a letter for you." So he takes out his portfolio and writes, at the dictation of the dying soldier, his last message to wife or mother. Tears begin to flow from those obdurate eyes, the heart is open, and he may do just what he pleases with it.

"Now, you need a friend, that can go with you where wife or mother could not go; let me recommend Jesus;

"The friend of sinners, yes, 'tis he,
With garments dyed on Calvary."

And the dying man, it may be hoped, receiving the message, falls into the arms of bleeding Love, and presently is with Christ in paradise.

That was substantially the history of hundreds, if not thousands on our battle-fields and in the hospitals. Oh, there is mighty power in a sympathizing tear: power with God, for it leads to importunate, energized prayer; and power with men, for it melts the heart like wax.

An Indian guide to a revolutionary soldier by the name of Cassikimao, was mortally wounded. The soldier came up to him and asked:

"Do you know anything about Jesus Christ?"

"Oh yes; me know much about that."

"How long have you known about it?"

"Long, long time ago—when me very young. Me go see Indian, Kaunaumeek. In little log house me find pale man, all alone. He look sick. He meet Indian. He pray with him. He make much prayer. He talk

out of Spirit book. Many times he look on Indian and say, 'Poor friend,' and his eyes all run down with tears. Me learn much."

"What did he teach?"

"He teach—Son of God come down to this world—he look like man—he preach—he make miracle; he make broken-bone-man leap; he make sick man well; he make blind man see; he die for sinner, white and red. He in heaven now; pray for poor sinner—send him good heart."

"Have you been in the habit of praying to Him?"

"Always—ever since with pale man."

"Shall you go to Him when you die?"

"Oh, yes; me certain Jesus Christ no forget poor Indian. Me never forget him one day. Me hope see him and pale missionary 'fore morning. Me no fear. Inside eyes all open; inside heart all smooth like lake Sahillan. Me very weak now. Put my hands on my breast—there, now me never move again till angel trumpet wake me. O Lord Jesus, pity poor ignorant Indian. Make him white like snow; make him beautiful like rainbow; make him all good, like thy own self;

and let him live with thee for ever and ever. Amen."

So he died; a sheaf gathered by a tear.

It is stated that Dr. Judson, on a certain occasion, ascended a river in Burmah on a steamer. While the boat was lying by the shore one day, he landed and walked up on the bank. There he met a heathen woman of high caste. He went up to her, looked upon her with glowing face and streaming eyes, gently pressed her hand and pointed up, turned away again, and walked down to the boat. She watched him till he disappeared; then turning to a native who came along, she said:

"Brother, I have seen an angel of God."

That heavenly face, beaming with love, was before her, and she began to pray: "O God! in the wind, in the clouds, in the earth, hear me; help me!" And he did hear and help. Soon a female missionary was sent there, found her, and showed her the way to God through Jesus. With rapture she embraced the truth, became a teacher; and as the result, several self-sustaining schools and churches have been established there, and large num-

bers converted to God; all the fruit of a tear. It is the language of heart to heart. Go weeping, bearing the precious seed of the truth, and you shall come again rejoicing, bringing sheaves with you.

And remember, "he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."

X.

SYMMETRY.

GOD wrought a miracle to make Zachariah and Elisabeth the parents of the great forerunner and herald of Jesus, because they were "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Let us study this symmetry of Christian character, and learn what it is that God so highly honors.

1. Symmetry includes constant advancement.

They were "walking" in the right way. In this respect there are three, perhaps four, classes of Christians.

There are those who are moving in the wrong way—becoming less like Christ, less interested in his service, "backsliding." This is fearful. It is bad enough to be sliding down a precipitous hill towards a fearful abyss, with the face that way, so as to see the danger; but to be sliding down *backward*, the

face turned toward the celestial city, and dreaming of its pearly gates, yet all the while sliding down toward the bottomless pit, that is dreadful.

Then there are those who are standing still—making no apparent progress. Mark where they are to-day, and in a twelvemonth they are there still. No more Christ-like, no more weaned from the world, no more active or devoted, when will they reach the pearly gates?

Then there are those who advance by impulses. They occasionally leap and run in the Christian race, make rapid progress for a while, and then pause. They are full of zeal and enthusiasm for a season, then cold and indolent. That is better than never to advance at all. Commend me to the Christian that sometimes is awake and alive, rather than to one who is always dormant. Yet there is a more excellent way.

Those whom God approves are making constant advancement, growing in grace, in knowledge, in spirituality, in activity, day by day. They are "steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord." They have a steady

object before them; and watching thereunto with prayer, they get nearer to Jesus every day. These are rare gems. No wonder God sets such store by them, and scoured a kingdom once to find them. Yet it is the privilege of every believer so to walk.

2. Symmetry has regard to all the commandments.

It requires a due regard to every moral precept. There is a great deal of gnarled religion in this respect. There are good mothers who are unobliging neighbors. There are zealous men in the prayer-meeting, who are sour husbands or crabbed parents. There are earnest exhorters, that oppress their own hired men; generous givers, who are hard in trade. There are daughters very devoted to young friends, but indifferent and unsympathizing with their mothers and sisters. The religion that God loves is alike good everywhere, breathing the spirit of Jesus upon all around, and embracing every relation of life.

3. Symmetry embraces all the ordinances:

The positive institutions of religion, as well as its moral precepts: those which pertain directly to God, as well as those which per-

tain to our fellow-men. It is strange, but there are those who are exceedingly conscientious in regard to their duties to men, who excuse themselves from walking in the ordinances of God; as if they were more deeply indebted to their fellows than to their Creator and Redeemer.

God demands and deserves our homage and worship, and worship requires some forms and ordinances by which it may be regulated. God has established these, and it is not for us to change or neglect them. Under the gospel they are as simple and pleasant as love can make them. The closet, for private communion with God; the family altar, where God shall be recognized by the household; the Sabbath, with its public worship and works of love; the public profession of Christ, entering his fold in the way of his appointment, by baptism and the Lord's Supper.

There are many, and the number is painfully increasing, who try to be Christians privately, and say, "Cannot I be a good Christian without making a public profession of religion?" But this is Christ's own appointment, and we are not at liberty to change or

neglect it. He says, "Whoso confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father and the holy angels."

But you say, "I do confess him. I am willing to say to any one who asks me, that I believe in him, and hope in him." But that is not the way Christ has appointed to confess him. He says, "Do this in remembrance of me." You propose to remember him in some other way; but he says, "Do this." If a very dear friend, to whom you were under unspeakable obligations, should give you a ring in dying, and say, "Wear this in remembrance of me," you would never feel satisfied to throw it away, and say, "I will wear his glove." If Jesus had made no "ordinance" for this purpose, you might select your own methods; but where he has so distinctly appointed the way, "Do this," you are not at liberty to substitute something else.

Personal comfort and progress require it. In an experience of over forty years, I have never found a strong, happy, growing Christian remaining out of the church. I have found many trying to nurse a sickly, feeble hope which they had entertained for twenty,

thirty, and even fifty years; but it was with difficulty they could keep it alive. It had never grown stronger, usually weaker and weaker, and less satisfactory to themselves.

Usefulness requires it. How can you say anything for Christ while you do not profess to be his? If you endeavor to live in all other respects a Christian life, it is so much subtracted from the claims of religion. The world look on and say, "There is as good a man as there is in this community, and he does not profess to be a Christian." And so they put down to the credit of human nature what is due to the grace of God, and rob him of his glory.

Then what if all followed your example, as all have an equal right to do? There would be no churches, there would be no communion, and soon there would be no public worship, and ere long no Christian institutions whatever. Jesus knew what we needed when he established his fold and appointed its distinguishing features. All there is of value to society and to the world in Christian institutions requires that you walk in all the Divine ordinances.

And, finally, gratitude to your Redeemer requires it. It seems to me, if I were going to select one of the commands of Christ that I would not obey, this dying requirement—made as he held the cup in his hand, as a memorial of his blood, which was to be poured out on the following day, made from the fulness of a heart of love, and made for my own good—should be the last.

No. If you would be strong in the Lord, useful in the world, confident of Divine approbation, make no reservation. Never ask, "How little can I do and be a Christian?" but, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" How shall I manifest my love and gratitude to him who has done so much for me," and walk in all the commandments and ordinances blameless?

XI.

BLAMELESSNESS.

ONE little word in the character of Zacharias and Elisabeth contains a world of meaning—"blameless." There are Christians of great activity and talent, whose usefulness is paralyzed by some great defect. The accumulations of a lifetime may be lost by a single misstep. Hard-earned reputation, the fruit of years of toil and care, is destroyed by a single misdemeanor. It is pitiful to see the ruin thus occasioned, and one's utmost effort for usefulness neutralized.

Not that you can always avoid being blamed. This term does not imply that men will never complain of you. As long as they are selfish and depraved, or liable to mistakes, you may be blamed. Jesus was blamed and hated. He was killed simply because he testified of the world that its deeds are evil. If you are a true and faithful witness for Christ, the world will hate you, and speak all manner of

evil against you. Do not let that distress you.

But to be "blameless" is so to live as to be without blame before God, and to give no just cause for blame before men. This requires that you should abstain—

1. From all injurious employments—the manufacture or sale of any article chiefly or largely detrimental to society or to individuals: intoxicating drinks, tobacco, gambling implements, obscene, immoral, or skeptical books and prints, or any work that requires the habitual violation of the Sabbath. There are enough employments that are useful, and will enable you to do good, while promoting your own interests. And it is important to select an occupation which will afford the best opportunities of blessing others, while you provide for yourself. The spirit of Jesus can and should permeate the business of life. He brought heaven into every-day duties.

2. From all unchristian methods of prosecuting a business in itself lawful and good. If you would be blameless, you should not serve as clerk for one who requires you to

misrepresent his goods; nor, as apprentice or journeyman, to one who requires you to impose bad work for good upon his customers. You should not overreach in buying and selling, or take advantage of the necessities of the poor. No customs of the trade, no commands of an employer, no universal practice will make you "blameless" before God in these matters. Strict integrity and uprightness should govern you.

The tongue. You will find occasion for a strict watch over this "unruly" member. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. It setteth on fire the course of nature." Half the anguish of a groaning world proceeds from an untamed tongue. "He that keepeth his tongue shall be able to govern his whole body." Smother an unholy feeling and it will die. Give vent to it by speech and it is like a flame burst forth. An unkind word, a careless jest, an insinuation may be the death-knell to hope or happiness to some one. Let the law of kindness be on your lips, let no back-biting, vulgar, injurious word ever issue from them; "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Amusements. Here we enter upon delicate and somewhat debatable ground. That soul and body require recreation is certain. How it may "blamelessly" and wisely be secured is the question.

The most common resort for this purpose is to games of chance or skill. These games appeal to a certain trait which God has implanted in every mind, and which in its natural connections is wholesome. And he has made provision for its gratification by connecting with all the industries of the world, just enough of uncertainty to give a pleasant exercise to this inherent trait of our nature. If the farmer knew just how much he should raise, or the merchant just what his profits would be, or the artist just how he would succeed, much of the interest of those avocations would be gone. And the stronger this propensity is, in any mind, the more of hazard is sought. Hence there are those who prefer the fatigue and privations and perils of the explorer, the hunter, the navigator, or the soldier, to the quiet of home.

But when this propensity is taken out of its normal relations and concentrated, like

distilled liquids, it becomes dangerous and destructive, leading on to gambling and all its deadly consequences. If so, is not society at fault in furnishing, almost from the cradle, all manner of "innocent" games for amusement? All that ingenuity and skill and money can do to multiply these forms of gratification is done. And like every other propensity of body or soul, as they are unduly indulged, they crave greater and greater indulgence, till it is well nigh impossible to satisfy them. So children come to maturity with a burning passion for hazard. What wonder that the pathway of adventures, though strewn with the graves of disappointed victims, is still thronged with eager candidates; and that the gambling hells all over the land are glutted with wrecks of noble manhood!

Taking society as it is, two rules may aid the Christian in walking "blameless."

First, never engage in any games which are often perverted into gambling. Do not use the implements, cards, dice, or what not, usually employed by the gambler. They lead to temptation, and the example is pernicious. Most of those who have become enslaved to

that destructive vice, have come from the classes of moderate players, as drunkards all come from moderate drinkers.

And secondly, those games usually considered innocent, and which are not perverted to gambling, may only be pursued in moderation, and when mind or body needs recreation. To pursue them for the sake of the amusement, is a sinful waste of time. Every moment is precious, and may bear golden fruit, if rightly improved. No Christian can afford to lose it. And a thousand forms of recreation are open, embodying usefulness with pleasure.

Places of amusement. The same rules apply to these. Such as are notoriously promotive of vice and wickedness, like the theatre and the circus, cannot be blamelessly visited by the Christian.

I think the general conviction of men of the world was indicated in the case of a young friend of mine some years ago. She was receiving the attentions of a young man who made no pretensions to religion, and he repeatedly invited her to attend the theatre, but she declined. As he persisted in his requests she told him: "I am a professor of re-

ligion and do not think it consistent for me to go there." After they were married he said to her: "If you had gone to the theatre with me, I should never have married you. When I found out you were a member of the church, I should have said: 'That is no place for a Christian, and if she can betray her Saviour, she may betray me.'"

The same rule applies to balls and assemblies and public dancing. Certainly the social affections may be cultivated in every innocent and harmless way. But such assemblies as, by late hours, bad air and insufficient dress or over exertion, injure the health—or by temptation to vain show in dress, to excitement of the passions, to pride, jealousy, or dissipation, injure the soul—cannot be considered "blameless."

One general principle underlies all these matters. The Christian who has reached the point where he is desirous to entertain the question whether he may not innocently enjoy a game of whist or billiards, or a social dance, has already gone far from Christ, and should be aroused to earnest effort to return. So much sweeter, so infinitely superior are the joys of

the Christian heart, when filled with the Spirit of God, to anything of this kind the world can give, that there will be no disposition to raise such an inquiry.

And I beseech you, when constrained to decline such invitations and separate yourself from these frivolous pleasures, never do it with a melancholy face, and such an appearance as to lead others to say: "I pity these poor Christians; they are shut out from everything pleasant." But with such glowing heart and beaming eyes as will constrain them to feel: "How superior to ours are the joys of Christians. I wish I could drink of the same fountain, and know the blessedness of the Christian experience!" So shall you not only be "blameless," but attract the poor pleasure-seeker to Jesus and to heaven.

XII.

The Power.

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." Let me ask your special consideration of this baptism of the Spirit—the source of power for the service of God.

1. It is a mighty power to give courage and endurance to the Christian.

It will make the most timid and shrinking bold as a lion. Look at the wonderful change it wrought in the apostles. See Peter, stealthily creeping to the door of the hall where Jesus was under examination, trembling and denying his Lord from the questioning of a maid; and then see and hear him as he preaches on the day of Pentecost, charging upon the Sanhedrim the murder of Jesus: "Him ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." What has happened to Peter? Simply this baptism of the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, "they were

all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." And surely, none who compare the words of Peter in the judgment hall, with his subsequent words in the temple, can doubt for a moment that he spoke with another tongue. This heavenly Messenger is still given for the same purpose, and if you receive this baptism you will receive strength to do and to bear.

2. It is a mighty power to give light to the understanding.

The apostles had been three years in the school of Christ, but they were not prepared to preach till they received this Divine illumination. "Tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." They did not understand the spirituality of his kingdom. Nothing but actual vision could convince them of the resurrection. But after that baptism, how clear their perceptions; how glorious their vision of eternal things—never erring, never at a loss to understand and preach the great mysteries of the kingdom. So mighty is the Holy Ghost as a teacher and guide.

No school of the prophets now can qualify for this work. "He," said Jesus, "shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. He shall lead you into all truth. He shall take of the things of mine and shall show them unto you." So he still leads all who yield to his teachings to a true understanding of the way.

But it is important to remember the method of his teaching. It is not, ordinarily, by a direct and immediate communication to our hearts, acting as an original and independent teacher, sent to make a new revelation of God to man. Christ says, "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." The word of God is his sword, and we feel the sword, not the hand that wields it.

I would not say that the Spirit does not communicate directly with our spirits. No doubt impressions have been and still are received directly from his influences. But they are not to be relied upon or waited for, as a standard of duty. Depending on pretended direct impressions, has been the source of very much of the delusion and fanaticism in

the world. Other spirits, besides the Spirit of God, may make impressions upon us, transforming themselves into angels of light. And we can only discriminate between the true and the false by comparing them with the word of God. "To the law and to the testimony." Of late it seems to have been the grand device of Satan to supplant the truth of God by spirit manifestations, so called; and the most ridiculous and puerile statements of "mediums" have been allowed to outweigh the testimony of Jesus. Give no heed to these seducing spirits. I have known spiritual teachers, so called, to be led to attempt the most absurd things, following, as they believed, the suggestions of the Spirit, and yielding themselves to the control of those delusions, instead of the teaching of the word. Those who yield thus can never know to what length of fanaticism and folly they may go.

Follow the teaching of the Spirit, wait and pray for Divine illumination, but only through the word. If ever tempted by any impression to turn away from "the truth as it is in Jesus," say to that tempting spirit, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

4. The Holy Spirit is the power to "convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This is its legitimate work. It produces spiritual sensibility—gives energy to conscience, and vividness to the sense of obligation and responsibility. Then it renews the heart; makes the sinner a new creature in Christ Jesus, and he is born again.

5. In its fulness it imparts a radiance to the Christian which is well nigh irresistible.

It may be experienced in the midst of life. In a revival of religion in a manufacturing village, one of the brethren was deeply moved. He went into the weavers' room, where he could scarcely be heard; but the swelling emotions of his heart could not be concealed. They were struck with his appearance. He passed through the room; and the result was, the gate was shut down, the inmates crowded to the place of prayer, and the proprietor and a large part of the operatives were brought to Christ.

XIII.

The Methods.

1. Speak for Jesus.

Use the power of speech, that heaven-born gift of God, for his glory. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." By speech, all that is good in you, and would otherwise die with you, becomes the property of the world, and goes forth to influence the world.

Speak, then, a word of exhortation—to stimulate to activity; a word of admonition—to guard against danger; a word of instruction—to enlighten the ignorant; a word of praise—glorifying God; a word of confession—melting the heart of opposition; a word of prayer—bringing down blessings.

The word of the Lord is the fire and the hammer. Speak it to Christians, speak to sinners. Speak to the mourner, the tempted, the anxious, the hardened. Speak of your

love to Jesus, and to all about you. Of what avail for good are pure and heavenly emotions if shut up in your own heart. Open your heart to your children, your wife, your dear friends. "Speak often," speak freely, always speak in love.

2. Write for Jesus.

Not one Christian in a thousand begins to appreciate the value of correspondence, as a power for good. A word spoken may be lost from diverted attention; it may be resisted, it may be debated; but a kind and loving epistle, taken to the chamber, where there is no object to distract, no room for discussion, no occasion for shame; a letter from home, endorsed by all the endearing recollections of loved ones away, in the calm retreat with time and room for reflection, is a powerful appeal, and often pierces to the heart. I have in my possession many missiles of this description, which have been sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, and which are dear to me, for the execution they have done, and beautiful for their simplicity. I cannot refrain from inserting one as a specimen. It was written by a daughter, herself scarcely a

fortnight old in Christ, to her father, who had been for twenty years a confirmed atheist, and which was instrumental in bringing him and all the other members of the family to the feet of Jesus. So bitter was he in his hostility to the truth, that when he heard his daughter was seeking salvation, he threatened to send for "Paine's Age of Reason" for her to read. He would not have her carried away with fanatical excitement. But he was dissuaded from that; and she soon found peace in believing. Then, as he had gone away a few miles to attend to his labor, she sat down and wrote him the following simple letter:

"DEAR FATHER: Although it is a very great cross to me to write you, knowing as I do your opinion on the subject of religion, still I feel it my duty, and had rather write than talk to you.

"A great change has taken place in my heart in a few months, and I trust my sins are forgiven; and I mean, henceforth, God helping me, to lead a Christian life, and not seek after any earthly good, but live to the honor and glory of God.

"But what pains me most is, that I must walk alone in the Christian life—neither father nor mother to help and guide me. Perhaps you may think it all nonsense, and the excitement of the time; but I never was more calm and considerate than at the present moment. We know there is a heaven and a hell, and that there is a God; and that we must all die and be judged by him; and we know not how long we may live, any of us. Oh, then, dear father, I beseech you make your peace with God, and suffer not another day to pass till you become a Christian. That we may all meet, an unbroken family in heaven, is the prayer of your loving daughter

"ELLEN."

The father said the first thing he did, when he received that letter, was to "knock off swearing;" but that did not help him much. So he left his work and went home, and to the surprise of everybody went to the house of God. He gave up his atheism and yielded his heart to Christ; and they are now a happy, "unbroken family," on their way to heaven.

Looking over my files, I find letters from

a pastor's daughter to a schoolmate in the same room; from a merchant to another in an adjoining town, with whom he was intimate; from a teacher to a pupil in his school; from a young man in Boston to a friend whom he had never seen, all effective in promoting the conversion of those to whom they were written.

Write for Jesus. Do not let one day pass without despatching some message for Christ. Write to intimate friends. Write to brothers, sisters, parents, children, schoolmates, Sunday-school scholars, comrades, at home and abroad, near and afar off. For three cents you can preach Jesus to one in California or Alaska. And oh, the preciousness of such a message to one so far away. Never, till you know by experience what it is, a thousand miles from kindred and friends, among strangers, longing for sympathy, to receive such a missile, will you know what such a message is worth. Indict every word with prayer, baptize it with tears, seal it with love and send it forth, followed by aspirations to God, and it shall not be in vain.

3. Sing for Jesus.

Here is another source of power, but little understood. Music is the language of the emotions as words are of thought. And there is great need of inspiration. Men know better than they are willing to do. Melody arouses even the animal instincts. The hippopotami follow the British regiments up and down the rivers of India, attracted by the martial bands. The wornout and broken-down cavalry horses of Sheridan, grazing in the pasture at City Point, when they heard the bugles of Gen. Grant, pricked up their ears, formed themselves in line, and charged on a plank fence and stove it to pieces. Two or three simple but inspiring national airs, sung everywhere, were worth more than twenty recruiting officers in filling the depleted ranks of the army. Who does not know the power of the Scotch pibroch or the Marseillaise? But none can appreciate the glory of song save those who sing with the Spirit, whose souls are tuned to praise.

An intemperate Universalist, ragged and forlorn, recently straggled by a chapel where the people of God were assembled. As he passed he heard them singing,

"Nearer, my God, to thee; nearer to thee."

He stepped up to the gate and stood, spell-bound by the melody, till first a brother and then a sister with glowing face invited him to go in. He went, and his heart was melted and subdued. Then sing of Jesus:

"Sing of his dying love,
Sing of his rising power,
Sing how he intercedes above
For those whose sins he bore.'

Sing familiar hymns and tunes; for devotional melody, unlike words, never clogs or becomes stale. In sacred music the power of thought and feeling are combined. "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." "Sing praises unto God; sing praises."

"Sing till you feel your heart
Ascending with the tongue;
Sing, till the love of sin depart,
And grace inspire your song."

4. Scatter the printed page.

Beside all waters—in all forms. Never be without the handbill and the tract. Enclose

them in your letters. Drop them by the wayside. Lay them on your counter—do them up in every package. You have heard of a postmaster, accustomed to hand them out with letters, till he received numerous letters of thanks from those who had been led to Jesus by reading them. Be on the watch for opportunities.

5. Take aim.

It is estimated that in common musketry it takes an average of eighty bullets to bring down a man. But with a sharpshooter, perched in a tree or hidden behind some ambush, taking deliberate aim, nearly every shot is effective.

So in the Christian warfare—a vast amount of ammunition is wasted in vague and general effort, for want of aim. Select your man. Single out individuals and labor and pray for their conversion.

In a revival, several years ago, three young converts began to mark down their companions, and one after another was converted, till each of them had a list ranging from twenty-five to thirty-one, more than three-fourths of whom were trusting in the Saviour.

In another place, several sisters united together in such a definite aim, till over one hundred were born into the kingdom of Christ.

Despise not the day of small things.

Do the least service Christ has for you. If you cannot convert a sinner, give a cup of cold water to a disciple.

"There are woes which you may lighten,
And burdens you may share;
And hopes with which to brighten
The shadows of despair.
Then no more wait, but earnest
Begin at early dawn,
For angels now are calling
And you will soon be gone."

In all this wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

6. Be wholly consecrated.

Present your body and spirit a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; which is your reasonable service. "Seek first the kingdom of God." Renouncing self, seek only the honor of Christ, and you shall inherit all things. One of the sweet paradoxes of the gospel is, "As you give to Christ, you inherit." If you love your neighbor as yourself, then all your neighbor's prosperity is yours.

This love is sometimes seen between two friends. But in the Christian heart it extends to all; whatever of blessedness is enjoyed by any one is mine, if perfect love reign in my heart.

Thus, be wise to win souls. Study to adapt yourself to the circumstances—the wants—the habitudes of the age and people among whom you live.

XIV.

CHRIST ALL IN ALL.

"PUT ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." As the sun of righteousness, let him fill your whole horizon. Paul says, "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Make him all in all to you.

1. As your Foundation.

"Behold," says God, "I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. Whosoever believeth in him shall not be confounded." "Other foundation can no man lay." Gold and silver will perish, the adamantine rock decay, but Jesus abides. Build only on Christ.

2. As your Teacher:

The teacher that came from God. Other men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; but it was only on some matter thus revealed to them. Jesus spoke of his own,

from personal knowledge. He spoke with authority—as never man spoke. He brought life and immortality to light. Blot out the teachings of Christ, by his own lips and those of his apostles, and night would fall upon the spiritual world, as deep and dreadful as if the sun were blotted from heaven.

3. As your Example.

"Follow me," says Jesus. He asks you to go nowhere that he has not gone before you. Take no other model—you might imitate some great defect; but Christ is perfect. His spirit is to be your spirit. "Christ in you." His mission is your mission; and how glorious that mission—TO BLESS EVERYBODY; to "save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins." Let Jesus be your pattern.

4. As the Victor over death.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." This body shall sleep in Jesus, and by his power shall be awakened from that slumber. He has triumphed over death and led captivity captive.

5. As your great High Priest.

"He ever liveth to make intercession for you." The high priest, when he went into the most holy place, once a year, to make atonement for the sins of the people, bound upon his heart the golden breastplate, wherein, upon twelve precious stones, were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. So Jesus has entered into the most holy place in heaven, and bears upon his heart the names of all who have put their trust in him, before the throne.

What a thought is this! Is Christ your Mediator with God? Then you are not unknown in heaven. Jesus has presented your name and had it recorded there in his book of life, and bears it on his heart before God. When you reach the pearly gate and knock for entrance, and the angel inquires who you are, and you present your name: "Oh, yes," he will say, "we were expecting you. I remember when your name was borne by the great High Priest before the throne. Come in, thou blessed of the Lord." So you are escorted through the streets of the celestial city, not as a stranger, but as one long known

and waited for. Oh make it certain that Christ is all in all to you as your Mediator with God. Let no other trust intrude.

"Oh, can I bear the piercing thought,
What if my name should be left out
When Thou for them shalt call!"

6. As your King, your Commander.

Like a good soldier you must be at your post at roll-call. Let no other lord have dominion over you. Leap to do the first and slightest bidding of your Great Captain. Covet the post of honor in some self-denying struggle. Then Christ as your King shall extend his protecting arm over you. If you owe him fealty as King, he owes you protection. And till his mighty arm is subdued, none shall pluck you out of his hand, or separate you from his love.

7. As your Forerunner.

"I go to prepare a place for you." A mansion, a crown, a kingdom. Glory, honor, and eternal life. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

8. As himself the everlasting portion of your soul.

"As thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us:" to be swallowed up in God, perfectly identified with all that is good and blessed in the universe. So shall heaven be a glorious reunion of all who have toiled and fought, and come off conquerors and more than conquerors, "through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony."

May you be enabled by the grace of God, so to maintain this conflict, as to say at last, with another Christian soldier, "I am now ready to be offered I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

"But, while I'm a stranger, away from my home,
I'll toil in the vineyard and pray;
I'll carry the cross while I think of the crown,
And watch for the break of the day."

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